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21 *new left review*

THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

Edmund Thompson The Logic of Extensionism

Theodor Adorno A Marxist Metaphysician

Michael Rustin Perspectives for the Left

Roy Medvedev The Afghan Crisis

Vladimir Zhe A Dissident Manifesto

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| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 1 | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>Edward Thompson</i> | Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization |
| | | DOCUMENT |
| 33 | <i>Wang Xizhe</i> | Restore Genuine Marxism! |
| 49 | <i>Theodor Adorno</i> | Bloch's Traces: the Philosophy of Expressionism |
| 63 | <i>Michael Rustin</i> | The New Left and the Crisis |
| | | INTERVIEW |
| 91 | <i>Roy Medvedev</i> | The Afghan Crisis |

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Traditionally the socialist movement was closely associated with anti-militarism, which was regarded as an integral part of anti-imperialism. The invention, and use, of nuclear weapons lent a new and extraordinary urgency to agitation against war preparations. In Britain the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament mounted an impressive civic resistance to the escalating nuclear arms race, contributed to the climate in which the first Test Ban Treaty was signed, and contributed to the beginnings of the opposition to the Vietnam war. This Review was itself in large part a product of the socialist current within the early CND. Yet from about 1965 CND steadily declined. The specific, terrible, threat of global nuclear conflagration receded from consciousness, even on the Left—a failure of focus shared by this Review. Meanwhile nuclear weapons systems underwent a dual proliferation: more states acquired the ability to wage nuclear war while new systems were developed which connected ‘tactical’ and ‘theatre’ nuclear weapons to the vast overkill capacity of the strategic stockpiles. The United States, and the capitalist powers generally, were responsible for both types of proliferation. While the Pentagon and NATO perfected more dangerous weapons systems, elsewhere in the capitalist world such states as South Africa, Israel, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Brazil strove to acquire a nuclear weapons capacity of their own. The Soviet Union generally opposed such proliferation and was more insistent in its disarmament proposals. Yet, as Edward Thompson argues in this issue of the Review, military technology and military strategy in the nuclear age come to impose their own priorities. Thompson, a sponsor of the recently formed European Nuclear Disarmament campaign and a recent critic of the ‘security state’ in England, gives a chilling account of the possible scenarios of nuclear devastation.

Thompson argues that the sustenance of the modern nuclear weapons systems, commanding immense resources and poised to destroy civilization, requires for its understanding a new concept—‘exterminism’. Though the logic of exterminism partakes of both imperialism and militarism, as traditionally understood by Marxists, it also represents something radically new. It may be thought that Thompson overstates the degree of symmetry between East and West, and assumes too unproblematic a harmony between anti-exterminism and movements of liberation, but he is surely right to insist that nuclear weapons, pregnant with holocaust, cannot simply be analysed in terms of competing class forces or social

systems, but also possess a menacing dynamic of their own. Discovering the most effective ways to minimize, and eliminate, the 'exterminist' threat must become a priority for socialist movements everywhere. Few contemporary warnings have been as powerful as that of this remarkable essay.

Michael Rustin's theses on 'The Crisis and the New Left' seek to identify the urgent questions of domestic politics which confront socialists in the eighties. He assesses the experience of the early New Left (he was an editor of NLR in the early sixties), of the May Day Manifesto of 1967 (of which he was secretary) and the subsequent development of a more distinctly Marxist, and class oriented, political culture in Britain in the seventies. He argues that the theoretical gains of the past decade will be rendered valueless unless they are embodied in a more unified and practical framework. Neither the new openness of the Labour Party, nor the rich variety of new centres of socialist publication and research, will ensure that the Left is not again marginalized, or absorbed by the mainstream of social democratic politics. As Rustin himself indicates his political conclusions differ from those we have upheld in the Review. At the same time we welcome his thoughtful reflections on the damaging fragmentation of socialist research, publication and education, with its plethora of competing academic, institutional and political affiliations.

The course of events in Afghanistan has been traced by Fred Halliday in two recent issues of the Review (NLR 112 and 119). In this issue Roy Medvedev assesses the reasons for the Soviet intervention in December, and its implications for the future, with characteristic balance and realism.

In our last issue Tamara Deutcher gave a graphic account of how China appeared to the visitor during the recent period of hesitant official relaxation after the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. In this issue we publish one of the most interesting documents to surface at this time, Wang Xizhe's appeal for a 'Return to Genuine Marxism'. In our next issue we will publish a survey of the new Chinese oppositions and their place in the historical pattern of Chinese Communism by Gregor Benton.

Theodor Adorno's surprisingly warm consideration of a work by Ernst Bloch supplies a missing dimension to the debates on 'Aesthetics and Politics' which have been published by NLR and NLB. In it Adorno seeks to elucidate the epigrammatic wisdom of a socialist philosopher who could find a promise of human happiness in the lowliest traces of our everyday existence.

We draw our readers' attention to the price increases and special offer detailed on the contents page.

Notes on Exterminism the Last Stage of Civilization

Comrades, we need a cogent theoretical and class analysis of the present war crisis.* Yes. But to structure an analysis in a consecutive rational manner may be, at the same time, to impose a consequential rationality¹ upon the object of analysis. What if the object is *irrational*? What if events are being willed by no single causative historical logic ('the increasingly aggressive military posture of world imperialism', etc.)—a logic which then may be analysed in terms of origins, intentions or goals, contradictions or conjunctures—but are simply the product of a messy inertia? This inertia may have drifted down to us as a collocation of fragmented forces (political and military formations, ideological imperatives, weapons technologies): or, rather, as two antagonistic collocations of such fragments, interlocked by their oppositions? What we endure in the present is historically-formed, and to that degree subject to rational analysis: but it exists now as a critical mass on the point of irrational detonation. Detonation might be triggered by a accident, miscalculation, by the implacable upwards creep of weapons technology, or by a sudden hot flush of ideological passion.² If

we drill all this in too tidy a logical formation we will be unprepared for the irrationality of the event. Twenty-one years ago, in the forerunner to this journal, Peter Sedgwick (addressing the arguments of a different moment) alerted us to this irrationality: 'A conspiracy theory was implicit in all analysis produced from within the Stalinist orbit. "The ruling circles of the United States" were "bending all their efforts to prepare a new war", "fresh plans of aggression" being constantly prepared by these very circles. A criminal foresight was thus ascribed to the enemy, in a manner both implausible and alien to Marxist categories. What Wright Mills calls "the drift and thrust towards World War Three" is indeed to be ascribed to the existence of oligarchic and military ruling classes (whose distribution over the continents of the globe is, incidentally, somewhat more widespread than the Partisans of Peace ever hinted). But the danger of war arises, not from conscious planning on the part of the élites . . . If this were so, we could all sleep safely, for the "ruling circles" would hardly be likely to plot their own annihilation . . . War is possible as the outcome of policies initiated by these irresponsible minorities, as the final unforeseen link in a causal chain forged at each stage by the previous choice of some ruling class. World War Three could burst out as "something that no one willed"; the resultant of competing configurations of social forces . . . If Man is ever obliterated from the earth by means of his own armaments, there will be no simple answer to the question: Did he fall, or was he pushed?'³

Twenty-one years on, and the immediacy of this question, as well as the political demands of the moment, break up the mind. I can offer no more than notes, fragments of an argument. Some fragments must take the form of questions, addressed to the immobilism of the Marxist Left.

The Deep Structure of the Cold War

A swift caricature of whatever theory underlies this immobilism would run like this. It is in stance *a priori*: the increasingly-expert literature on weaponry, militarism, and in peace research remains unread.⁴ It is informed by a subliminal teleology: history must move through its pre-programmed stages, do what men will, and we may refuse, with

* Thanks to Ken Coates, Mary Kaldor, Dan Smith, Dorothy Thompson and the editors of this review, for comments and criticisms: none are responsible for my conclusions.

¹ I am using 'rationality' in these notes to denote the rational pursuit of self-interest, as attributed to a nation, class, political élite, etc. In a different perspective none of these pursuits may appear as rational.

² I take the British adventure at Suez (1956), the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968), and the United States helicopter operation in Iran (1980) to be examples of such hot flushes. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is a military-political act of a more calculated order: perhaps a cold flush.

³ Peter Sedgwick, 'NATO, the Bomb and Socialism', *Universities & Left Review*, 7, Autumn 1959. (My italics).

⁴ The literature is now extensive. For a preliminary evaluative bibliography, Ulrich Albrecht, Asbjørn Eide, Mary Kaldor *et al.*, *A Short Research Guide on Arms and Armed Forces*, London, 1978. Also the select bibliography appended to Asbjørn Eide and Marek Tóć (eds.), *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*, London 1980. Bibliographies are regularly updated in the *ADRU Report* (Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex).

religious optimism, Marx's grimmer option: 'the mutual ruin of the contending classes.' It confuses origins with consequences. And it confides in an anthropomorphic interpretation of political, economic and military formations, to which are attributed intentions and goals. Since the 'cause' of the Cold War is commonly ascribed solely to the evil will of 'imperialism', it then becomes possible to analyse events in terms of imperialism's supposed rationality (however malevolent these reasons) rather than in terms of the irrational outcome of colliding formations and wills.

In its story-line it goes something like this. The original, and also the replicating, cause of Cold War lies in the drives of world imperialism. These drives are then analysed, with attention to Africa, South-East Asia, Latin America, and with a peroration about the Middle East and oil. China is invoked as part of the revolutionary heritage: its inconvenient diplomatic and military postures are then forgotten.⁵ Europe is passed over without analysis, except in its accessory role in world imperialism. State socialism, however 'deformed' (and here Marxists of different persuasions offer different grade-marks for deformity), has a military posture which is 'overwhelmingly defensive'. This can be confirmed by an *a priori* exercise, through a brief attention to differing modes of production and social systems: the capitalist mode is motivated by the drive for profit and for new fields of exploitation, whereas the arms race imposes an unwelcome burden upon socialist states (however deformed) by diverting resources from socialist construction.

As for the Bomb, that is a Thing, and a Thing cannot be a historical agent. Preoccupation with the horrors of an imaginary nuclear war is diversionary (did not the Vietcong call that bluff?), and it leads to hideous heresies, such as 'neutralism', 'pacifism', and to utter confusion in the class struggle. CND exemplified such capitulations to moralism and 'pacifism', which is why it 'failed'. Meanwhile, the anti-imperialist struggle prospers in the Third World (Vietnam, Angola, Iran, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe), and eventually it will be carried thence to the 'barbarians' in the capitalist heartlands.⁶ The best that these barbarians can do, while they wait, is to engage in frontal class confrontation until the capitalist economies begin to buckle.

But there might be other ways to situate our analysis. We would examine, less origins, than the consequences of consequences. We would attend with care to military technology, strategy and formations. We would confront the possibility of war with a controlled pessimism of the intellect. We would read the immediate past as the irrational outcome of a collision of wills, and we would expect the immediate future to enlarge that irrationality.

I can only glimpse the story-line that this might give us. But it would, I think, replace Europe, and, at a short remove, China, at the centre of

⁵ And will, I fear, be forgotten through most of these notes. I find Chinese diplomacy inscrutable.

⁶ See Régis Debray, 'A Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary', *NLR* 115, May-June 1979.

the story. It would start from the us-USSR polarization, and, by extension, the USSR-China-us triangle. What is known as the 'Cold War' is the central human fracture, the absolute pole of power, the fulcrum upon which power turns, in the world. This is the field-of-force which engenders armies, diplomacies and ideologies, which imposes client relationships upon lesser powers and exports arms and militarisms to the periphery.

On the periphery there is still political mobility, and the story-line already given is acceptable enough, although more distorted (and distorted into militarist forms) by the dull enforcements of the central poles than the story usually allows. In exceptional cases, where the polar antagonism is so acute that conventional military intervention would bring the immediate probability of us-USSR confrontation, the space for political mobility is actually enlarged: Iran and the Middle East are the obvious examples.⁷ But along the central fracture, political mobility has been, for thirty years, congealed: at worst, it assumes degenerative forms. And here we must acknowledge not one but two imperial formations, however different their origin and character. For the Soviet Union, which extends from the Baltic States to Mongolia, includes within its strategic imperatives all that inflammable human material in Eastern Europe which must be held perpetually under political, military and ideological controls.

It must become clear already that 'imperialism' is an inadequate category to encompass more than a part of this situation of global contradiction and collision. It is a situation without precedent, and it becomes lost to view when we try to stuff it into inapposite categories. It is a situation both of antagonism and of reciprocity, for the increment of weaponry on both sides takes place in part according to a reciprocal logic, and is even regulated by elaborate agreed rules. The MX missile is a clever device to stretch to the limits without rupturing the games-plan of SALT II: each missile will chunter on tracks between a number of concealed firing-points, but inspection-covers will periodically be thrown open to Soviet satellite observation to reassure 'the enemy' that there is only one missile in each track-system.⁸

In this games-plan it matters less than may be supposed to define the military posture of the Soviet Union (or of 'the West') as 'basically defensive'. That is no more than a moralistic attribution of supposed intention. Both superpowers are mounted and armed for instant annihilating attack. Barbed wire, pillboxes, trenches, anti-tank guns—the accessories of a Maginot Line—might be categorized as 'defensive' weapons, but ICBMs may not.

The Bomb is, after all, something more than an inert Thing. First, it is, in its destructive yield and its programmed trajectory, a thing of menace. Second, it is a component in a weapons-system: and producing,

⁷ At any time before the 1960s, the exactions of OPEC or the truculence of Iranian students would have very certainly elicited a Western military punishment.

⁸ Herbert Scoville, Jr, 'America's Greatest Construction', *New York Review of Books*, 20 March 1980.

manning and supporting that system is a correspondent social system—a distinct organization of labour, research and operation, with distinctive hierarchies of command, rules of secrecy, prior access to resources and skills, and high levels of policing and discipline: a distinctive organization of production, which, while militarist in character, employs and is supported by great numbers of civilians (civil servants, scientists, academics) who are subordinated to its discipline and rules.⁹

It means rather little to peer into the entrails of two differing modes of production, searching for auguries as to the future, if we are so inattentive as to overlook what these modes produce. For, increasingly, what is being produced by both the United States and the USSR is the means of war, just as, increasingly, what is being exported, with competitive rivalry, by both powers to the Third World are war materials and attendant militarist systems, infrastructures and technologies.¹⁰

There is an internal dynamic and reciprocal logic here which requires a new category for its analysis. If 'the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist,' what are we given by those Satanic mills which are now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination? I have reached this point of thought more than once before, but have turned my head away in despair. Now, when I look at it directly, I know that the category which we need is that of 'exterminism'.

The Logic of Nuclear Weapons Systems

Originism and anthropomorphism have no need to examine weaponry and strategy. Weapons are things, and strategies are instrumental plans for implementing policies which originate elsewhere. Thus what we must do is examine the ruling élites and their political intentions. All the rest can be taken as given.

This sounds like commonsense. But it is wrong. It is to foreclose analysis of self-generating independent variables before it has even commenced. Nuclear weapons (all weapons) are things: yet they, and their attendant support-systems, seem to grow of their own accord, as if possessed by an independent will. Here at least we should reach for that talisman, 'relative autonomy'.

This increment in the means of extermination is, of course, the outcome of someone's choice. But where do such choices originate? Are they political or technological choices? The answer is complex. One part of the answer is that, given the defences of official secrecy—defences almost impermeable in the Soviet Union—we do not know.

The rival arsenals of the USA and USSR stood at 6,500 substantial

⁹ Mary Kaldor, 'The Significance of Military Technology', in *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*, pp. 226–9

¹⁰ See M. Kaldor and A. Eide (eds.), *The World Military Order. The Impact of Military Technology on the Third World* (1979).

nuclear weapons in 1960: at 14,200 in 1979: and, even within the game-plan of SALT II, will arrive at some 24,000 *strategic* weapons by 1985.¹¹ Analysts used to explain this steady, and accelerating, increment according to a simple action-reaction model: 'Implicit in this view were the ideas that the decisions of leaders actually determined force structure and that leaders' orders were carried out by the military bureaucracy . . . It implied that the leaders of each side reacted rationally to the behaviour of the other side . . .'¹²

This rationality is now challenged. Weapons innovation is self-generating. The impulse to 'modernize' and to experiment takes place independently of the ebb and flow of international diplomacy, although it is given an upward thrust by each crisis or by each innovation by 'the enemy'. Weapons research evolves according to long waves of planning, and the weapons for the year 2000 are now at the R & D (research and development) stage. Deborah Shapley defines this incremental pressure as 'technology creep', owing to its 'gradual, inconspicuous, bureaucratic character'. Its modes differ: US weapons increment is more active and innovative, USSR increment more reactive, imitative, and in the form of 'follow-on' modifications.

But in both powers there is a steady incremental pressure more inexorable than can be explained by recourse to notions of an 'arms lobby' or a military 'interest'. Shapley lists as factors, in the United States, 'the enthusiasm of scientists for advertising the potential of their work, the interest of program managers and design bureaus in testing improvements, and the armed services' wish to have the most up-to-date versions of their systems.' Alva Myrdal adds 'the interservice competition for shares of the military budgets, leading to an arms race within the arms race'—a competition evident in Britain now as service chiefs compete around the 'successor' to Polaris—and the 'mental virus' of the 'technological imperative'. Zuckerman identifies similar forces: 'the men in the laboratories', the 'alchemists of our times', who 'have succeeded in creating a world with an irrational foundation, on which a new set of political realities has in turn had to be built.' He implies ('working in secret ways which cannot be divulged') that official secrecy prevents him from further revealing their mode of operation and political impingement.¹³

This does not seem a sufficient explanation for a thrust which is absorbing a significant proportion of the world's GNP, and which is manifestly irrational even in military terms (weaponry for adequate mutual 'deterrence', or mutual assured destruction (MAD) already existed, in the absence of any effective anti-ballistic missile defences,

¹¹ I take here the conservative estimates of Deborah Shapley. These do not include lesser weapons. In other counts, if all nuclear weapons are included, the world's sum has already passed 50,000.

¹² Deborah Shapley, 'Arms Control as a Regulator of Military Technology', *Dandelion*, 109, Winter 1980.

¹³ Alva Myrdal, *The Game of Disarmament*, New York 1976, pp. 11-12; Lord Zuckerman, 'The Deterrent Illusion', *The Times*, 21 January 1980 (now reprinted in *Apocalypse Now*, Spokesman Books).

some twenty years ago). What Shapley and Zuckerman do not emphasize, and what any socialist would insert into the argument, is the competitive drive of capitalist arms producers, a drive which has become more intense within the shadow of recession. We will return to this important component of exterminism in a moment.

Yet it is not clear to me that we have found a simple explanation for this incremental thrust in profit-taking (in the West) and in action-reaction (in the East). Weapons research, in both blocs, originates in bureaucratic decisions rather than out of the play of market forces. The state is always the customer: and, in market economies, the state guarantees the high—even arbitrary—profit return, which is passed on (often in hidden allocations), to the taxpayer. Arms manufacture may take place in the public or the private 'sector', but even where, as in the United States, there is acute competition between private enterprises for the state's tender, the number of competitors is diminishing, and covert agreements are normal between the great competitors to ensure a 'fair' division of the spoils. We do not need the profit motive to bring us to extermination, although it helps. Ideology and a general bureaucratic inertial thrust help more.

There is no profit motive in the Soviet Union: *ergo*, the 'fault' for the arms race lies only with 'the West'. How do we know this? Can states and bureaucracies not have motives for arming? The briefest survey of historical, as well as contemporary, evidence will tell us that they can. The decisive point for Soviet armament increment appears to date from around the time of the fall of Khrushchev: from the mid-1960s, there has been a steady growth in nuclear weaponry, as well as development and modernization of the armed forces. In terms of differential growth, the pace of the Soviet armourers seems to accelerate in the 1970s, during the 'quiet' years of detente; by a stupendous concentration of resources and scarce scientific skills, the Soviet armourers reached forward until nuclear weapons 'parity' with the United States seemed within their grasp. At the same time, the Soviet navy was deployed as an active world presence. Similar economic and technological decisions as in 'the West' (economies of scale, long production runs) have underwritten the entry of Soviet armourers as major salesmen in the markets of the Third World. Figures for all these matters are ideologically-contaminated and in dispute: but socialists who refuse them any credence (as figments of CIA propaganda) are sadly ill-informed. The facts are of this order.¹⁴

Obviously, political decisions influenced this increment. The political élite in the Soviet Union 'decided' to pursue that infinitely-receding objective of nuclear weapons 'parity', and at the same time to signal its world presence as a military and naval power. But then, *how* did the élite arrive at this decision? Under what pressures were its policies and ideology militarized?

Weapons, to be sure, are things. Their increment is not independent of

¹⁴ For a reliable evaluation of the increment in both blocs, see Dan Smith, *The Defence of the Realm in the 1980s*, London 1980, esp. chapters 3 and 4.

political decisions. But politics itself may be militarized: and decisions about weaponry now impose the political choices of tomorrow. Weapons, it turns out, are political agents also.

Weapons, and weapons-systems, are never politically-neutral. When European settlers with muskets encountered Red Indian tribes with bows and arrows, the politics of the matter were determined by the barrels of their guns. If the settlers had only had bows and arrows, this would have imposed upon them the politics of the peace-pipe and the parley. As to 'the Bomb', the refinement of nuclear weaponry has been steadily eroding the interval in which any 'political' option might be made. The replacement of liquid by solid fuel means that rockets may now stand in their silos, instantly ready. The time of delivery has contracted: in the mid-1970s the time required for the interhemispheric delivery of nuclear bombs had shrunk to about ten minutes, and it is now perhaps less.¹⁵ This hair-trigger situation, combined with the increasing accuracy of missiles and automated electronic reaction-systems, has encouraged fantasies that a war might actually be launched with advantage to the aggressor ('taking out' every one of the enemy's ICBMs in their case-hardened silos), or that a 'limited' war might be fought in which only selected targets were 'taken out'.

In such a hair-trigger situation, the very notion of 'political' options becomes increasingly incredible. The persons who decide will not be a harrassed President or First Secretary (perhaps not available at the moment of emergency) but a small group of military technicians, whose whole training and rationale is that of war, and who can, by no conceivable argument, be said to represent the rational interests of any economic or political formation. Very probably they will act without any 'political' mediation: already, in the Cuban missile crisis, American naval commanders engaged in the exceedingly hazardous tactic of forcing Soviet submarines to surface, in pursuance of standard operating procedures during a red alert and without the knowledge of the us President.

Today's hair-trigger military technology annihilates the very moment of 'politics'. One exterminist system confronts another, and the act will follow the logic of advantage within the parameters of exterminism.

The 'Theatre' of Apocalypse

In extremity this may be so. But, surely, there is a long political terrain to be travelled first, before we reach an unlikely extremity (from which it is best to avert our eyes)? And surely strategic decisions are no more than the projections upon the global map of prior political choices?

This is wrong again, or half-wrong. Military strategy is not politically non-aligned. NATO 'modernization' with cruise missiles and Pershing IIs is a case in point.

Strategy imploded upon West European political life at Brussels on

¹⁵ Alva Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

12 December 1979, in a supposedly technological-strategic decision to 'modernize' NATO nuclear armoury. Ground-launched cruise missiles on European territory are the hardware designated by us strategists for a 'limited' or 'theatre' war. They are commended for their extreme accuracy, even if the claims for CEPs (Circular Error Probable) of only a few hundred feet may be empty brags.

They implode upon politics for two reasons. First, they translate the notion of 'theatre' war from fantasy to actuality. ICBMs carry such colossal destructive power that they do, in fact, deter. Even military strategists, while multiplying warheads, can see the irrationality of ICBM warfare. The militarists have unprecedented resources, which, however, they can never put to use. Hence extreme impatience builds up, most notably in the Pentagon, to design some new games-plan, which would advantage the power superior in nuclear technology. In this re-writing, Soviet strategists are unaccountably unco-operative: 'Recent moves in NATO have encouraged plans for selective, discreet strikes rather than all-out exchanges . . . Unfortunately, the Soviet Union has shown little interest in Western ideas on limited nuclear war . . .'¹⁶

Even so, the Soviet hand might be forced: faced with a *fait accompli*—limited 'theatre' war ('taking out' selected targets in Russia as well as 'taking out' most of Europe) might be imposed upon the Soviet Union if the clear alternative was ICBM obliteration. This would then be a victory for 'the free West'.

The pressure rises upwards from the laboratories and the strategic war-games simulation rooms to NATO planning committees (co-opting on the way the compliant cowboys who inhabit the Institute for Strategic Studies¹⁷ and the Royal Institute of International Affairs) to the United States Secretary for Defense and to the President's national security adviser (the prime architect of the Iranian helicopter fiasco), Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Brzezinski: I think you see already the beginning of a serious review manifesting itself in the Secretary of Defense's defense posture statement, in being able to respond to nuclear threats in a flexible manner, in the serious thought being given to our nuclear targeting plans, in the much higher emphasis being placed on command and control capabilities.

All of these reviews are designed to enhance our ability to bargain in the context of severe crisis, to avoid a situation in which the President would be put under irresistible pressure to preempt, to avoid leaving the United States only the options of yielding or engaging in a spasmodic and apocalyptic nuclear exchange. *Question*: Are you saying that

¹⁶ Lawrence Freedman, Head of Policy Studies, Royal Institute of International Affairs, in *The Times*, 26 March 1980.

¹⁷ 'The threat of a Soviet nuclear attack on Western Europe could leave NATO the choice only of an early resort to the American arsenal, putting American cities at risk . . . Missiles in Western Europe would give the American President an intermediate option': Gregory Trevorton, Assistant Director, Institute for Strategic Studies, in *The Observer*, 19 November 1979.

you want the United States to be able to fight a "limited" nuclear war? *Brzezinski*: I am saying that the United States, in order to maintain effective deterrence has to have choices which give us a wider range of options than either a spasmodic nuclear exchange or a limited conventional war . . .¹⁸

The only unaccountable element in this whole operation is the fact that NATO politicians have eagerly endorsed a 'choice', by United States strategists, to designate their territories as the 'theatre' of apocalypse. What has happened is that an option of astonishing political dimensions has been imposed upon West Europe in the anodyne vocabulary of strategy and technology. In fact, in this case the strategy was invented long before the weapons. The embodiment of 'flexible-response' strategy was endorsed by NATO as early as 1967; was enforced by Schlesinger; and was a matter of open discussion among experts in the early 1970s. It was in 1975 that the American analyst, Herbert York, wrote with admirable candour: 'Today's Western Europeans have chosen to buy current political stability by placing awful risks . . . over their lives and their future. Perhaps their choice was inadvertent; perhaps they did not and even today still do not realize what they have done . . .'¹⁹

us strategy by then had already adopted the imperative that the United States should be the Sanctuary, and that nuclear war should be limited to external 'theatres': West Europe was designated (without the knowledge of its peoples) as the sacrificial proxy. That the peoples of West Europe did not 'know' of this new designation was the effect of official secrecy and the management of information; that intellectuals (and socialist intellectuals) did not know merits less excuse—Herbert York and Alva Myrdal were there for us to read.²⁰ The new generation of missiles to match this strategy was in advanced development by the mid-1970s. What has been presented in the West European media, and in debates in West European parliaments, in the last few months as a regrettable but necessary 'response' to the Soviet ss-20s was set in motion before the ss-20 had been heard of. It is difficult to know whether these politicians are plain liars, illiterates, or the victims of polluted civil service briefs.

The final act of 'decision' was registered, at Brussels, in a non-elective, quasi-political, quasi-military assembly: NATO. The fantasy was translated into fact in a series of elaborate bureaucratic planning steps, inscribed with runic acronyms: NATO's LTDP (Long-Term Defence Programme), NPG (Nuclear Planning Group), and HLG (High Level Group). From 1977 to 1979 the NPG and HLG scurried through secretive meetings at Los Alamos, Brussels, Fredrikshaven, Colorado Springs,

¹⁸ Interview in the *New York Sunday Times*, 30 March, 1980.

¹⁹ Herbert F. York, 'The Nuclear "Balance of Terror" in Europe', *Ambio*, 4, nos. 5-6, 1975.

²⁰ Alva Myrdal, *op. cit.*, chapter two gives a thorough presentation of the whole 'theatre' strategy, published in 1976.

Homestead Air Force Base (Florida), etc.²¹ NATO then 'requests' the US government, in its generosity, to send this can of rattlesnakes across to the designated theatre, and, in the same instant, notifies European governments that they are to receive them.

One watches, spellbound, the bureaucratic forms of exterminism. I do not mean that 'strategy' or 'bureaucracy' did all this unaided. No-one could have been more abject in their complicity than Mrs Thatcher and Mr Pym. I mean only to note that a prior condition for the extermination of European peoples is the extermination of open democratic process. And I am inviting readers to admire the style of the thing.

The second reason why this military hardware implodes upon our political life is this. Cruise missiles are, with finality, *committing*. Ground-launched, operated solely by US personnel (whatever evasive parliamentary provisos are made about 'consultation'), they commit this nation absolutely to strategic imperatives imposed by Sanctuary USA. In every crisis, someone else's finger will be upon 'our' trigger.

Cruise missiles are *committing*: strategically, but also politically. They place us, with finality, in the games-plan of the Pentagon. True, F-111s which, during the Iranian helicopter fiasco (and we know what 'consultation' went on then) were placed at Lakenheath on nuclear alert, are committing also. But the cruise missiles have a new kind of political visibility, a manifest symbolism of subjection. That is why they must be repelled.

This is not—need one say this?—to urge a reversion to the old sloganry of 'national independence'—'Yankees Out'! The cause of European Nuclear Disarmament (END) is only one point of engagement in the international struggle for peace. The alert, generous and growing North American peace movements will understand this and will give us their support, just as (in quieter and more complex ways) opinion will bring its own pressures to bear in the Soviet Union also. For no 'theatre' war which reaches the point of nuclear exchanges will ever be contained within its theatre; it will be, at the most, a matter of days before the RCNMs launch off, and Washington and Moscow, Utah and West Siberia, are brought within the 'theatre'. END will provide a shield, just as other shields must be formed in the Pacific and the Middle East.

It is not the 'Yankees' but the exterminists who must be called out—and, first of all, our own. Two vignettes: returning through the US base at Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire, after the march against cruise missiles on 17 May, one loud and over-enthusiastic marcher was shouting abuse at the American personnel: he was promptly taken in custody, by the British police. One North American marcher politely engaged in conversation a black American airman who was on his way out of the base. Was it true, she asked, that this was a British base, or was it really an American one? The airman commenced to offer a courteous reply:

²¹ A chatty account of this bureaucratic delinquency is given by Stephen R. Hanmer, Jr, in *NATO Review*, February 1980.

he was promptly interrupted and taken off in custody, by the *American* military security police.

The Scope for Self-determination

There is a contradiction in the logic we have traced above. The diplomacy of ICBM annihilation increasingly polarizes the world into absolute antagonism. Yet, since the launching of these missiles is the final act, the room for the deployment of the lesser means of war becomes, except at the periphery, increasingly restricted and hazardous. The client states of each grand alliance are reduced to impotence: they surrender their fate into the keeping of the Great Stockpile.

Examine the possible sequence of events in Iran, if the helicopter operation had not providentially aborted. (1) us troops, with miscellaneous CIA auxiliaries, arrive in Teheran. (2) Bloody fighting, the release of a few hostages, and the slaughter of the rest. (3) The usa bombs Iranian installations or mounts a punitive expeditionary force, in revenge for the slaughter of hostages, and to save the Presidential face. (4) The Iranian government appeals to the Soviet Union for military aid. (5) Confrontation. The point is that, at each stage of this sequence, the client states of NATO would have remained wholly captive and without 'consultation'.

It is in the face of such sequences that Britain and France make their pitiful and expensive gestures at maintaining an 'independent deterrent'. Polaris and the French s3 are aimed, not at the Warsaw powers, but at the White House. If they can commit us, we must maintain at least a mini-bluff that we can commit them. Trident will be purchased for £5,000 million or more pounds to buy a modicum of influence upon the Pentagon. As a 'deterrent' against the Soviet Union, Polaris, Trident and s3 are absurd: they are no more than our own pistols, and the right to determine the moment at which we will blow out our own brains.

But within this contradiction, little opportunities sometimes appear. The nations which resume mobility are those which detach themselves from either pole. Non-alignment brings an increment in real diplomatic influence. The superpowers must court stubborn Yugoslavia: captive Britain need not be noticed at all. European Nuclear Disarmament—the expulsion of weapons and bases, and detachment from bloc diplomacies—will be an act of self-determination, striking at the most sensitive points of power.

The Thrust of Exterminism

But that is a utopian vision. Let us return to the deep structure of the Cold War, or the thrust of exterminism.

Figures gesture only at process. Global figures are slippery digits. But by some calculations, the percentage of the world's GNP expended upon armaments has run, at any time since World War II, at between 6 per cent and 8 per cent, whereas in the run-up to the previous two

world wars it was never higher than 3 per cent.²² The current United States and NATO powers commitment to an *annual* increment, in real terms, of 3 per cent plus in arms budgeting (an increment which, no doubt, will be matched by the Warsaw powers, and also by China) may well push this towards 10 per cent in the next few years.

This may not appear as a fearsome figure until we appreciate three things. First, this production is concentrated in the economies of the advanced powers. The 'European-oriented alliances' (NATO and Warsaw powers) were responsible, in the mid-1970s, 'for about four-fifths of the total world military expenditure.'²³ This affects in radical ways the structuring of advanced economies. Second, such figures (derived from declared budgets) give only a partial view, since various support-systems for militarism (scientific, ideological) are civilian in character and their cost is masked.

Finally, this small figure (8 per cent) indicates the allocation of a surplus withdrawn from circulation, services and consumption. It is this surplus which we often take to be indicative of the priorities, the embodied symbols of temporal authority or of spiritual aspiration, which mark the character of a civilization. That surplus, worked up into artefacts, indicates what holds men and women in thrall and what they worship: the great tumuli, the megalithic circles, the temples, the pyramids, the great medieval cathedrals, the giant rockets in their silos, the MX missile system.

The MX missile project is noble in scope, greatly exceeding the prospects of any prior civilization in its grandeur. It will occupy a 6,000-square-miles complex in Nevada and Utah; require 10,000 miles of roadway; the missile-tracks will move, on 200 individual loops, between 4,600 case-hardened shelters. Security extensions and approach roads, with ancillary installations, may increase the total occupied area to 20,000 square miles. It is a greater, and far more expensive, project than the Panama Canal or the whole Alaskan pipeline system.

Undoubtedly, the MX missile-system will be the greatest single artefact of any civilization. It will be the ultimate serpentine temple of exterminism. The rockets in their shelters, like giant menhirs pointing to the sky, will perform for 'the free West' not a military but a spiritual function. They will keep evil spirits at bay, and summon worshippers to the phallic rites of money. Within the aura of those gigantic nuclear circles, the high priests of ideology will perform ritual sacrifices of taxes. In distant outposts of the faith, at Westminster, Brussels, and the Hague, Druidical servitors will bow low to the West and incant missileic runes.

Many millennia afterwards, visiting archaeologists from another planet will dig among the still-radioactive embers and debate the function of

²² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates are summarized by Frank Barnaby, 'Global Militarization', *Proceedings of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War*, March 1980.

²³ Myrdal, *op. cit.* p. 4. But the Third World is catching up, expending in 1978 (Barnaby, *passim*) 24 per cent of the world's total.

the great temple. The debate will be in vain. For the temple will be erected to celebrate the ultimate dysfunction of humanity: self-destruct.

Nuclear Economics

What both modes of production are now, increasingly, producing are nuclear weapons, tanks, submarines, small arms, nerve gas, etc.²⁴ Of course, some of this production is consumed: that is the privilege of the Third World, whose military expenditure has increased four-fold in the past two decades: from 10 per cent of the global total in 1960 to 24 per cent in 1978. The rate is accelerating. Over the same period Third World GNP was calculated to increase by a factor of 2.7, but military expenditure by 4.2. The major competitors in the Third World's arms market were, in 1978, the USA (47 per cent), the USSR (27 per cent), France (11 per cent), and Italy and the UK with 4 per cent each.²⁵ But non-aligned Austria and the nation of the Good Soldier Schweik are pushing for their share in the killing.

This is not contingency. It is process. The long waves of the armourers do not move in phase with the waves of diplomatic confrontation. Each international crisis legitimates the process, and strengthens the upswing. But in quiet periods of 'detente' there is an autonomous incremental logic. In the post-war years, the arms race has been like a rocket with three successive stages of thrust: the first Cold War, the Vietnam war, and, then, after a levelling off, the third upward thrust in the mid-1970s, in the midst of 'detente'. The French S3 which came into operation in May 1980 was commenced in 1974. The 'Chevaline' modernization of the Polaris warhead, at a cost of £1,000 millions, was devised in the early 1970s, authorized by Mr Heath in 1973, bequeathed to Sir Harold Wilson, carried forward secretly by Mr Callaghan, and announced triumphantly to a startled parliament in January, 1980, by Mr Pym. We have seen that current NATO missile 'modernization' was prepared in the mid-1970s. The upswing in US military expenditure commenced at the same time: US Defence procurement increased from \$45.8 billion in 1976 to \$55.6 billion in 1977 and \$69.0 billion in 1979. The US Defence budget for 1981-5 is projected at \$1 trillion. The increment in Soviet armaments appears to have taken off in the late 1960s and to have been more steady, a product of fewer political variables and of central allocations of plan, although certain surges can be attributed to an action-reaction model. Paradoxically, the SALT I agreement (1972), purporting to establish ceilings for numbers of strategic weapons, provides an example. US strategists assented to these clauses in the foreknowledge that they could make nonsense of them by placing several MIRVs (multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles) on each missile. In response Soviet armourers successfully developed their own MIRVs by 1975.

It may comfort socialists to see a 'cause' for this primarily in Western imperialism, and only secondarily in Soviet reaction. This is now beside the point. To argue from origins, to nominate goodies or baddies, is to

²⁴ An illuminating account of the present state of chemical warfare preparedness is in the *Scientific American*, April 1980.

²⁵ Barnaby, op. cit.

take refuge from reality in moralism. Nations which have been exposed to unremitting destructive attack, famine, and civil war (Cambodia), or which liberate themselves by a prolonged and total sacrificial military self-organization (Vietnam), do not emerge unchanged, to choose between policy options according to theoretical persuasion or moral intention. Superpowers which have been locked, for thirty years, in the postures of military confrontation increasingly adopt militaristic characteristics in their economies, their polity and their culture. What may have originated in reaction becomes direction. What is justified as rational self-interest by one power or the other becomes, in the collision of the two, irrational. We are confronting an accumulating logic of process.

This logic, while reciprocal, is not identical. In the United States a strong contributory thrust to exterminism comes from the normal dynamics of gigantic capitalist enterprise. Moreover, one can observe a collective capitalist General Will for survival or expansion, whether as counter-revolutionary reaction to indigenous anti-imperialist movements in the Third World²⁶ or whether in pursuit of interests and resources (notably oil) of the most old-fashioned imperialist kind.

Emma Rothschild, in a cogent journalistic essay, has recently re-stated (and up-dated) the argument that in the post-war decades the military industries have functioned in the United States, just as cotton did in the industrial revolution in Britain, as the 'leading sector': not 'as a single or multiple industrial sector . . . but rather as a cluster of industries joined by a common objective and a common customer.' Given an expanding market, and an assured, high, rate of profit, this leading sector has in turn stimulated the boom in electronics, civil aerospace, etc., as well as in secure enclaves of civilian research and development. She suggests that it is this leading sector which has both paced the long wave of growth and determined the national economic structure, in conformity with Schumpeter's criteria of 'breaking up old and creating new positions of power, civilizations, valuations, beliefs and policies.'²⁷

Rothschild argues also that this boom is entering upon cyclical decline. It is a sector which carries its own contradictions. It generates both inflationary pressures and unemployment, since the manufacture of advanced weaponry is capital-intensive. It has its own forms of technological obsolescence, as innovation becomes harder to achieve.²⁸

²⁶ The remarkable survey of the 'American Gulag archipelago' by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, and *After the Cataclysm* (both Spokesman Books, 1979) has received less discussion in Britain than it merits, perhaps because of differing interpretations of events in Indo-China. Some of the most terrible episodes (which merit—as do events in Cambodia—the description of exterminism) have been effected by indirection and proxy: see A. Kohen and J. Taylor, *An Act of Genocide: Indonesia's Invasion of East Timor* TAPOL, 82 Treport Street, SW1.

²⁷ Emma Rothschild, 'Boom and Bust', *New York Review of Books*, 3 April 1980.

²⁸ Since writing this article I have read the important report, 'The Role of Military Technology in Industrial Development', presented by Mary Kaldor to the UN Group of Government Experts on the Relationship of Disarmament and Development, May 1980. Kaldor argues a related but more complex case, with greater emphasis upon 'baroque' military technology: increasingly expensive, sophisticated, ineffec-

But a business boom on the edge of a bust is a snarling, irrational beast. It might even appear that as American hegemony faltered, in the aftermath of Vietnam defeat, and as arms expenditure levelled off, efforts to re-invigorate the leading sector became more deliberate, more highly-conscious, and more highly ideological and political in character.²⁹ What had been 'unconscious' process began to become, when threatened, conscious of itself: impulsive exterminism began to grow an exterminist mind and will. The immense security operations, the organs of political manipulation and information control, revealed by Watergate were not the product of Nixon: they were the natural civilian and ideological support-system for the military-industrial complex. Nixon's blunders exposed them to view, but they have long been resurgent.

Now, in 1980, crisis arrives—Afghanistan, Iran—and is eagerly welcomed. Ageing, overweight arms industries recollect the vigours of their youth. Huge injections of public money are brought to their rejuvenation. 'Defence Stocks Lead Market Up' is the response of the *Wall Street Journal* to Brown's latest budget. Lobbyists (who are often former Pentagon personnel hired by arms contractors) descend on the Pentagon: McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, General Dynamics, Grumman, Lockheed, General Electric, Westinghouse, Chrysler, etc. Congressmen are approached with promises of investment in their districts. Bribes and excessive commissions oil the procedures. Lobbying extends to regional and local military and air force units, and also to the Defence ministries and assemblies of NATO powers. The regular chime of contracts is announced, like the gazetting of top appointments, in the press. A random example—

'Lockheed Missiles & Space Co. unit received an \$18.2 million Navy contract for engineering service for ballistic missiles.'

'Grumman Aerospace Corp. was awarded an \$8.7 million Air Force contract for horizontal tail stabilizers for F-111 fighter bombers.'

'GK Technologies Inc. said its Automation Industries Inc. subsidiary has received a \$9.6 million contract from the Navy for research, development, test and evaluation of weapons systems . . .'

'Southland Oil Co. got a \$4.2 million contract from the Defense Logistics Agency for jet fuel . . .'³⁰

The MX missile system is not yet put to contract. In June 1979 it was costed at \$33 billion. By early 1980 it was costed at \$56 billion. By mid-

tual, and leading to technological distortions or dead-ends. Kaldor sees the weapons-systems industries in the USA and Britain less as a 'leading sector' than as a sector constructing and distorting industrial change, and leading to 'technological stagnation, the symptom of a vicious circle in which industrial decline stimulates military spending which then paradoxically accentuates the process of decline.' She finds the export of such technology to the Third World to be wholly negative, implanting decadence within the very pursuit of growth.

²⁹ See James Petras and Robert Rhodes, 'The Reconsolidation of US Hegemony', NLR 97, and the ensuing discussion in NLR 101-2.

³⁰ *Wall Street Journal*, 4 April 1980.

April of this year estimates had risen to over \$100 billion.³¹ The best plum to be landed so far this year has been the \$4 billion deal for 3,418 cruise missiles for the us air force. (Europe's ground-launched missiles have not, at the time of writing, been contracted). Although Boeing is the winner, some part of the killing will, by quiet pre-agreement, be divided with its rivals.³²

I cannot, as is well known, understand economics. I leave all this to more competent minds to evaluate. But somewhere within these matters lies one part of the thrust towards extermination.

The Inertial Push of Soviet Policy

We look in vain for comparable thrusts within the placid, planned features of Soviet bureaucracy. Indeed, if one is not a specialist in Soviet affairs, one looks in vain for anything (NATO propaganda apart), since the press opens up few inspection-covers, and no Watergate scandal affords us a momentary glimpse of the exterminists about their humdrum daily chores of power.

In trying to envisage the nature of Soviet process, I find an analogy with an ill-run, security-conscious university with a huge and overmighty engineering department, so powerful that it can nominate the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar, dominate the Senate, nobble most of the research funds, attract all the gifted graduates, and pack every committee. The engineering department is of course the military-industrial 'interest'. We are examining, not the self-reproduction and invasive properties of capital, but the self-reproduction and imperative pressures of a bureaucracy.

The Soviet state was born in military struggle: consolidated a ramshackle empire into a Union by military struggle. In the 1930s the priority upon heavy industry had a heavy military accent: militarism was built, not only into the superstructure, but into the base. And militarism inevitably found a huge (and popular) extension in the Great Patriotic War. In a significant sense, the Soviet has always been a 'war economy'.³³

Arms-related industries have always received the first priority for scarce resources, including skilled manpower; the good conditions of work and pay attract 'the most highly skilled cadres'. In 1970, when arms expenditure had levelled off, in the United States one-quarter of all physicists, one-fifth of all mathematicians and engineers, were engaged in arms-related employment.³⁴ Today's proportions are probably higher. No comparable figures can be cited for the USSR, but there are strong grounds for supposing that, in a less highly developed

³¹ Herbert Scoville, op. cit.; *New York Times* (science supplement), 15 April 1980; *Guardian*, 13 March 1980.

³² *Times Magazine*, 7 April 1980; *Guardian*, 27 March 1980; and, on the activities of arms lobbyists, *New York Times*, 30 March 1980.

³³ Oskar Lange, *Papers in Economics and Sociology*, Oxford 1970, p. 102.

³⁴ Rothchild, op. cit.

economy which has, by a remarkable concentration of resources, developed its weapons-systems close to the point of parity with the United States in force and in sophistication, a significantly higher proportion of the nation's most skilled physicists, engineers, chemists, mathematicians, experts in electronics and cybernetics, are concentrated in this sector.

The arms complex is as clearly the leading sector of Soviet industry as it is in the United States, but this is expressed within bureaucratic modes of operation. There is some spin-off from military technology into civilian industry: civil aircraft, nuclear energy. But Soviet weapons technology, which is paced by its sophisticated American competitor, has opened up a gap between itself and its civilian compatriots: 'recent military technology has become too sophisticated for . . . cooperation to be possible.'³⁵ The military complex and its successes are upheld as a model of organization and of management techniques, and these are exported to other sectors. Moreover, the needs of the military complex—in particular, the imperatives placed upon centralized planning, priority in access to resources, and direction of scientific skills—affect the structure of the economy as a whole, and colour the decisions of the political managers. It is the threat which might be afforded to the stability and interests of this complex which inhibit any introduction of 'market' mechanisms into the economy as a whole.³⁶

At the same time there is a greater direct exposure of the Soviet population to patriotic state propaganda than in most Western democracies: that is, what is (or is attempted to be) accomplished in 'the West' by the 'free' operation of the media is directly inculcated in Russia by such 'voluntary' organizations as DOSAAF: the Voluntary Society for Co-operation with the Army, Aviation and the Navy, with a membership of 80 millions, and with clubs, sports facilities, and military-patriotic or civil defence education organized around factories, farms and schools. And alongside and supporting all this there are the huge, quasi-autonomous operations of the Security Services, inheriting historic traditions of despotism, supporting military-patriotic ideology, and exerting an independent inertia of their own.

In David Holloway's view, 'such military-patriotic manifestations are now 'a pervasive feature of Soviet life.'³⁷ 'The Armed Forces and the defence industry occupy an entrenched position in the Party-state apparatus. The high priority which the Party leadership has given to military power has thus become institutionalized.'

But while military officers are awarded high status and privilege, and their influence can be seen at the highest level of political life, that

³⁵ Zhores Medvedev, 'Russia under Brezhnev', *NLR* 117, Sept–Oct 1979, p. 18.

³⁶ Alec Nove, 'Problems and Prospects of the Soviet Economy', *NLR* 119, Jan–Feb 1980, pp. 16–17.

³⁷ David Holloway, 'War, Militarism and the Soviet State', *Alternatives*, June 1980. See also the same author's 'Soviet Military & D' in J. Thomas and U. Kruse-Vandienne (eds.), *Soviet Science and Technology*, Washington DC, 1977. I draw heavily upon David Holloway's paper in this section, and thank him for permission to do so, but he is not to be held responsible for my conclusions.

influence (as in 1953, 1955 and 1964) has not been decisive. The interest has been mediated by the Party, and it would be mistaken to view the military—~~yet~~—as an autonomous interest. Brezhnev, who emerged with close experience of the military-industrial sector and with its backing, has satisfied its aspirations.

In this view, the incremental thrust in the Soviet Union towards extermination is not aggressive and invasive, but is ideological and bureaucratic. Yet it has, in Holloway's view, acquired an autonomous inertia, embedded in the structure of Soviet society, and can no longer be ascribed to reaction in the face of Western exterminism:

'Foreign influences are refracted through the Soviet policy-making process, in which Soviet perceptions, military doctrine, foreign policy objectives and domestic influences and constraints come into play. The effect of foreign actions on Soviet policy is complex and not at all automatic. In many cases the foreign influences combine with domestic factors to speed up the internal dynamic of Soviet arms policies. The very existence of large armed forces, a powerful defence industry and an extensive network of military R & D establishments generates internal pressures for weapons development and production . . . As a system progresses from conception to development, military and design bureau interests become attached to it, building up pressure for production. If it passes into production . . . enterprise managers are likely to favour long production runs.'

It does not look, under this analysis, like an aggressive thrust. Yet it is a dangerous inertial push, with its own hawkish imperatives of ideology and strategy (Czechoslovakia, 1968: Afghanistan, 1980), and which could afford nourishment to a popular culture of chauvinism, xenophobia, and even (when confronting China) racism. It is the more dangerous in that it is unchallenged by democratic exposure: no-one may ask, in public, why—after the first ICBMs were in place—the absurd yet decisive decision to match each weapon and to attain to 'parity' was ever taken? Only for a brief period, under the impetuous and contradictory Khrushchev, does an erratic challenge appear to have been offered to the process, and this challenge was offered by the First Secretary himself: a distinct fall-back in the rate of weapons increment, an explosive speech about 'the metal-eaters', even (as in generous non-military aid to the Third World³⁸ and as in the long personal exchanges between Russell and Khrushchev) a glimpse of an alternative, internationalist strategy, summoning up a non-aligned movement for peace.

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Thereafter inertia assumed the helm: ideological paranoia, fear of dissent, the null orthodoxy of official Soviet intellectual life, terror at Eastern European deviation, hostility at authentic non-alignment or even at Eurocommunist autonomy—all this going along with the games-play of top persons 'detente',³⁹ with SALT this and SALT that, with increasingly-military injections of 'aid' to the Third World, and

³⁸ See Zhores Medvedev, op. cit., pp. 11–12.

³⁹ See my 'Detente and Dissent', in Ken Coates (ed.), *Detente and Socialist Democracy: a discussion with Roy Medvedev*, Spokesman Books, 1975.

with the emplacement of the foul and totally unnecessary ss-20 on Europe's margins: a weapon which beckoned on, like a cue in the common script of exterminism, the entry of NATO's waiting cruise missile. The Soviet inertial thrust may be as humdrum as the cooked minutes of a captive Senate, but, when in collision with the hectic thrust of capital, it will do for us all.

Annihilation and Security

Let us attempt to assemble these fragments.

I am offering, in full seriousness, the category of 'exterminism'. By 'exterminism' I do not indicate an intention or criminal foresight in the prime actors. And I certainly do not claim to have discovered a new 'exterminist' mode of production. Exterminism designates these characteristics of a society—expressed, in differing degrees, within its economy, its polity and its ideology—which thrust it in a direction whose outcome must be the extermination of multitudes. The outcome will be extermination, but this will not happen accidentally (even if the final trigger is 'accidental') but as the direct consequence of prior acts of policy, of the accumulation and perfection of the means of extermination, and of the structuring of whole societies so that these are directed towards that end. Exterminism requires, of course, at least *two* agents for its consummation, which are brought into collision. But such collision cannot be ascribed to accident if it has long been foreseen, and if both agents have, by deliberate policy, directed themselves upon an accelerating collision-course. As Wright Mills told us long ago, 'the immediate cause of World War III is the preparation of it.'⁴⁰

The clearest analogies are with militarism or imperialism (of whose characteristics exterminism partakes). These may be found to characterize societies with different modes of production: they are something less than social formations, and something a good deal more than cultural or ideological attributes. They designate something of the character of a society: of its drive: and the direction of that drive. Militarism and imperialism are founded upon actual institutional bases (the military, the navy, the chartered trading companies and slavers, the arms manufacturers, etc.), from which they extend influence into other areas of life. In mature forms they appear as whole configurations (institutional, political, economic, ideological), and each portion reflects and reinforces the other. Exterminism is a configuration of this order, whose institutional base is the weapons-system, and the entire economic, scientific, political and ideological support-system to that weapons-system—the social system which researches it, 'chooses' it, produces it, polices it, justifies it, and maintains it in being.

Imperialism helps us both by analogy, and also by revealing the point at which analogy breaks down. Imperialism normally predicates an active agent and a subjected victim: an exploiter and an exploited. Vulgar imperialist theory tended to become enmeshed in an argument from origins: the drive for markets, raw materials, new fields for

⁴⁰ C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War III*, New York 1958, p. 47.

exploitation—if the originating ‘motive’ could be identified, this was held to explain all. Yet this failed to explain, not only many episodes—strategic and ideological imperatives, the expectation of rewards, the reciprocal influence of the subjected upon the imperial power—but also the irrationality (in terms of the pursuit of self-interest) of climactic imperial moments: in imperial rivalries, in the First World War, in fiercely-irrational ideologies which contributed to Fascism. It becomes necessary, then, to see Western imperialism as a force which originated in a rational institutional and economic matrix, but which, at a certain point, assumed an autonomous self-generating thrust in its own right, which can no longer be reduced by analysis to the pursuit of rational interests—which indeed acted so irrationally as to threaten the very empires of its origin and to pull them down.

So far, the analogy is helpful. This gives us the character of exterminism in the 1980s. No doubt we will have one day a comprehensive analysis of the origins of the Cold War, in which the motives of the agents appear as rational. But that Cold War passed, long ago, into a self-generating condition of Cold War-ism (exterminism), in which the originating drives, reactions and intentions are still at play, but within a general inertial condition: which condition (but I am now asking a question which will, I hope, be refuted) is becoming irreversible as a direction.

This is not because of the irrationality of political leaders (although this often helps). It is because the inertial thrust towards war (or collision) arises from bases deeply enstructured within the opposed powers. We tend to evade this conclusion by employing concepts which de-limit the problem: we speak (as I have done) of the ‘military-industrial complex’, or of the military ‘sector’ or ‘interest’ or the arms ‘lobby’. This suggests that the evil is confined in a known and limited place: it may threaten to push forward, but it can be restrained: contamination does not extend through the whole societal body.

But the more apposite concept, which is employed by some peace researchers,⁴¹ is that of isomorphism: ‘the property of crystallizing in the same or closely related forms’, or ‘identity of form and of operations as between two or more groups.’ Viewed in this way, the USA and the USSR do not *have* military-industrial complexes: they *are* such complexes. The ‘leading sector’ (weapons-systems and their supports) does not occupy a vast societal space, and official secrecy encourages low visibility; but it stamps its priorities on the society as a whole. It also deflects the direction of growth. In the US 1981 budget \$16.5 billion is allocated to ‘research, development, test and evaluation’ (RDTE) of weaponry. Of this less than 10 per cent (a mere \$1.5 billion) is allocated to MX research. But—‘This is more than the combined RD budgets for the Department of Labour, the Department of Education, the Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Drug Administration, and the Center for Disease Control; over

⁴¹ See Jan Øberg, ‘The New International Military Order’, in *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*, esp. pp. 54–64.

140 per cent of the RD budget of the National Science Foundation.⁴² Given the technology gap between the two powers, and yet the extraordinary sophistication of Soviet weaponry, the inflection of the direction of Soviet research must be even greater.

Science-intensive weapons-systems civilianize the military: but in the same moment more and more civilians are militarized. The diplomacy of 'posture' and bluff, together with the drive to steal some technological advantage, generate covert intelligence operations and the policing of information. The need to impose assent on the public (the US taxpayer, the Soviet consumer whose rising expectations remain unsatisfied) generates new resources to manage opinion. At a certain point, the ruling groups come to *need* perpetual war crisis, to legitimate their rule, their privileges and their priorities; to silence dissent; to exercise social discipline; and to divert attention from the manifest irrationality of the operation. They have become so habituated to this mode that they know no other way to govern.

Isomorphic replication is evident at every level: in cultural, political, but, above all, in ideological life. In a notable letter addressed last year to the California Board of Regents, Gregory Bateson, the social scientist, employed an analogy from biological systems: 'The short-time deterrent effect is achieved at the expense of long-time cumulative change. The actions which today postpone disaster result in an increase in strength on *both* sides of the competitive system to ensure a greater instability and greater destruction if and when the explosion occurs. It is this fact of cumulative change from one act of threat to the next that gives the system the quality of *addiction*.' Frustrated aggression 'backs up' until it permeates whole cultures.

It is within ideology that *addiction* to exterminism is distilled. The confrontation of the superpowers has, from its origin, always had the highest ideological content: ideology, as much as profit-making and bureaucratic growth, has motored the increment of weaponry, indicated the collision-course, and even (on occasion) sheltered some victims.⁴³ In both camps ideology performs a triple function: that of motivating war-preparations, of legitimating the privileged status of the armourers, and of policing internal dissent. Over more than thirty years, anti-Communism has been the means of ideological control over the American working class and intelligentsia; over the same period Communist orthodoxy has imposed ideological controls by a simple 'Stalinist' reversal.

The two camps are united ideologically in only one matter: in mutual hostility to any genuine non-alignment, 'neutralism', or 'third way'. For if such a way were to be possible, it would strike directly at exterminism's legitimacy. Dubcek and Allende must be overthrown, because they have trespassed upon the most sensitive territory of

⁴² Emma Rothschild, op. cit.

⁴³ The high ideological visibility of Yugoslavia and of Cuba may have protected them from military operations more than considerations of strategic sensitivity. Contrast the pitiful quasi-official cowboy expedition against Cuba (the Bay of Pigs) with the unprecedented military violence visited upon Vietnam.

ideology: their success would have challenged the very premises of the mutual ideological field-of-force. The contagion might have spread, not only through Eastern Europe and Latin America, but to the heartlands of exterminism themselves.

The concept of isomorphism provides a clue to developments in the past decade in Britain. In this client state of NATO with its faltering economy, crystallization proceeds with unusual rapidity: Official Secrets trials, burgeoning security and surveillance, the management of Official Information and of 'consensual' ideology, the positive vetting of civil servants, the rising profile of the police, jury vetting, the demotion of parliamentary and other democratic process, the oiling of the machinery of 'national emergency', the contingency planning of the Cabinet Office, the fatalities of *Protect and Survive*. While industries wither on the vine, and while 'public expenditure' is hacked at with a Friedmanite axe, new weapons-systems are planned and public money is flushed down the exterminist sluice.

Britain, as it enters the 1980s, offers itself as a caricature of an exterminist formation. The imperatives of 'defence' poison the nation's economy; the imperatives of ideology deflect even profitable weapons-manufacture into the hands of United States contractors. The subordinate inertial thrust of the national weapons-system-complex augments the imposts of NATO: a motive for the £1,000 million 'Chevaline' programme, we learn, was 'finding something for the large scientific establishment at Aldermaston . . . to do'.⁴⁴ The politicians who initiated these weapons-systems have now left the scene; their successors are now no more than a reflexive part of the support-system for these systems,⁴⁵ along with the civil servants, the scientists, the Treasury officials, the television controllers and the defence correspondents who afford these systems logistic supply and protection.

Even here where I write, in the rural West Midlands, I can sense the presence of neighbours: at Cheltenham, the headquarters of GCHQ signals interception; at Hereford, the base of the SAS; at Kidderminster, the manufacture of propellant for 'Sea-Slug' missiles (which came to public notice only after fatalities in an explosion); at Malvern, research into radar, but also into officially-secret things.

It is a cumulative process, crystallization in culture accelerating crystallization in the economy, and thence to politics, and thence back again once more. Security operations impinge upon politicians; job security in weapons industries impinges upon trade unions; expansion in military research, usually in the 'public sector', generates bureaucratic pressures in Britain much the same as the bureaucratic thrust of the Soviet managers; the Minister of Defence and the Foreign Secretary carry in their portfolios (to China, Oman, Pakistan) the briefs of arms

⁴⁴ *Guardian* defence correspondent, 27 May 1980.

⁴⁵ See the ineffable William Rodgers, Labour's Defence spokesman in the *Labour Weekly*, 23 May 1980: 'Some three-quarters of a million men and women serve in the forces today or are involved as civilians in support activities and the defence industries. . . . If the Labour Party ceased to care about defence, we should lose their support and never win an election again.'

salesmen; and at home, academics are funded to prepare these briefs. Since all these pressures accumulate in the direction of extermination, it is proper to designate them as exterminist.

The Moment of Greatest Danger

The analogy with imperialism takes us a long way, but in the end it breaks down. Imperialism calls into being its own antagonist in the movement for self-determination of the people of the subjected country. Exterminism does not. Exterminism simply confronts itself. It does not exploit a victim: it confronts an equal. With each effort to dominate the other, it calls into being an equivalent counter-force. It is a non-dialectical contradiction, a state of absolute antagonism, in which both powers grow through confrontation, and which can only be resolved by mutual extermination.

Yet exterminism does generate its own internal contradictions. In the West, a science-intensive war economy produces not only weapons-systems but inflation, unemployment, and deteriorating services. In the East, a war economy slows down and distorts the direction of growth, and generates shortages of resources and skills. The strains are felt most acutely in the client states of both alliances, where resentment grows against their captive state. As anxiety and dissatisfaction mount, there can be glimpsed, as an intolerable threat to exterminist ideology, the possibility of a truly internationalist movement against the armourers of both blocs.

This brings us closer to the point of crisis. An accelerating thrust has set the superpowers upon collision course, and the collision is to be expected within the next two decades.⁴⁶ Yet the economies and ideologies of either side could buckle under this acceleration. The injections of public money, even the MX missile, may not stave off us recession: it might even aggravate its form, in the disjunction between an advancing and a recessive economy.⁴⁷ In the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe it is ideological crisis which is most manifest: how long will those old controls work? The official description of reality induces only tedium; ideology is no longer internalized—it becomes a mask or a patter learned by rote, whose enforcement is a matter for the police.

As we know from history, this conjuncture of crisis and opportunity is the most dangerous moment of all. The ruling groups, habituated to the old modes and controls, sense the ground moving beneath them. The hawks and doves form factions. Actions are precipitate and impulsive. Neutralism, internationalism—democratic impulses in the East, socialist impulses in the West—appear as hideous threats to established power, challenging the very *raison d'être* of exterminist élites. In that situation of impending superpower collision and of ideological instability, it is not likely that 'we'—with our poor resources, our slight political preparation, our wholly inadequate

⁴⁶ If China places herself finally in either bloc, throwing her mass into the scales, it is difficult to see how collision will not occur.

⁴⁷ See Emma Rothschild, *op. cit.*, and Mary Kaldor, 'The Role of Military Technology in Industrial Development', *op. cit.*

internationalist communications—can succeed. It is probable that exterminism will reach its historical destination.

The Direction of Hell

I have been reading *Arguments within English Marxism*, and, leaving aside local disagreements and assents, have been puzzling over an ulterior difference of stance which neither I nor Perry Anderson have exactly defined. Which difference I will try to identify, in response to Anderson's invitation 'to explore new problems together'—even though this problem is an old one. It is, absurdly, one of generational experience.

My generation were witnesses, and petty actors, in the actual moment of the congealment of the Cold War, and the fracture of power across Europe. That fracture (enlarging the fracture of the 1920s and 1930s) has always seemed to me to be the locus of the field-of-force whose polar antagonisms generate exterminism.

The second generation of the New Left, who have conducted this review so long and so tenaciously, arrived on the scene when the Cold War had already congealed, and its ideological imperative had become a habit. At some point around 1960, Khrushchev's erratic pursuit of detente together (I would argue)⁴⁸ with the growth of CND-type peace movements in the West had offered a check to the exterminist thrust, had forced it to disguise its operations and to modify its aggressive vocabulary. Nuclear war (it was agreed on all sides) was 'unthinkable'.

But at the same time, on the periphery (and South-East Asia was then still on the periphery) a new mobility of national liberation and revolutionary movements was in evidence, which met with a savage Western response. The new generation of the Left was quick to identify this whole opening field of struggle: expert in attention to it: and eloquent in theoretical solidarity with anti-imperialist movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In all this they were right. But in the same moment preoccupation faded with the central emplacements of power: and it came to seem (wrongly) that confrontation between the two blocs *originated* at the periphery, and was carried only thence *to* the centre, so that its thrust and dynamics could be simply explained within the categories of imperialist thrust and anti-imperialist resistance. The role of western socialists became, more and more, to be that of observers and analysts of that external confrontation.

To my generation, which had witnessed the first annunciation of exterminist technology at Hiroshima, its perfection in the hydrogen bomb, and the inconceivably-absolute ideological fracture of the first Cold War (the Rajk and Rosenberg trials, the Cominform anathema upon Yugoslavia, McCarthyism and the advocacy of 'preventive war',

⁴⁸ I dissent sharply from the analysis offered by Anderson and others which tend to demote CND (pacifist, neutralist, middle-class, 'failed') and to canonise VSC. But, for the moment, this argument can be left aside.

the Berlin air-lift and the Berlin wall), this never seemed so. We had become, at a deep place in our consciousness, habituated to the expectation that the very continuation of civilization was problematic.

This expectation did not arise instantaneously with the mushroom cloud over Nagasaki. But I can, in my own case, document it fairly exactly. In 1950 I wrote a long poem, 'The Place Called Choice', which turned upon this expectation. The central section of the poem concluded thus:

'... Spawn of that fungus settling on every city,
On the walls, the cathedrals, climbing the keening smoke-stacks,
Drifting on every sill, waiting there to germinate:
To hollow our house as white as an abstract skull.

Already the windows are shut, the children hailed indoors.
We wait together in the unnatural darkness
While that god forms outside in the shape of a mushroom
With vast blood-wrinkled spoor on the windswept snow.

And now it leans over us, misting the panes with its breath,
Sucking our house back into vacuous matter,
Helmeted and beaked, clashing its great scales,
Claws scratching on the slates, looking in with bleak stone eyes.'

Such an apocalyptic expectation, which has never left me, is no doubt discreditable. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, whom I greatly respect, has recently chided the futurologists of doom, the 'negative utopians'; 'the world has certainly not come to an end . . . and so far no conclusive proof has reached me that that an event of this kind is going to take place at any clearly ascertainable point in time.'⁴⁹ And, of course, it would be worse, far worse, than an apocalypse for one to make oneself intellectually ridiculous. I would only too gladly read the arguments which show, conclusively, that my analysis of the gathering determinism of exterminist process is wrong.

Yet the arguments have substance, and the technology of the apocalypse exists. Nor have all apocalyptic visions in this century always been wrong. Few of those who prophesied World War I prophesied the devastating sum of the actual event; no-one envisaged the full ferocity of World War II. And the apocalyptic prophets of World War III do not match the kind of persons we encounter in our social history: eccentric vicars, zealous artisan sectarians conning *Revelation*, trance-struck serving-maids. Some emerge, with strategic war-plans in their hands, from the weapons-system complex itself: Sakharov, Mountbatten, Admiral la Rocque, Zuckerman. It was not Joanna Southcott who summoned the first Pugwash Conference, but Einstein and Russell. It was not Thomas Tany but Robert Oppenheimer who said, in 1947, 'the world is moving in the direction of hell with a high velocity, a positive acceleration and probably a positive rate of change of acceleration.'

We should, even in the matter of apocalypse, be a little exact. An

⁴⁹ 'Two Notes on the End of the World', *NLR* 110, July-August 1978.

exterminist climax might be aborted by a 'limited' local nuclear war (China, Africa, the Persian Gulf) whose consequences were so terrible that these frightened even the exterminists, and called up a new global wave of resistance. And even outright exterminist collision, with the full repertoire of ICBMs, in the Northern hemisphere would not necessarily extinguish all mammalian life, unless the globe's ozone layer was irreparably punctured.

What this would destroy would be Northern civilization and its economic and societal life-support systems. The survivors (one might suppose) would then be exposed to waves of plague and famine; great cities would be abandoned to rats and to rattish genetic mutants. People would scatter to un-contaminated lands, attempting to re-invent a sparse economy of subsistence, carrying with them a heavy inheritance of genetic damage. There would be banditry: fortified farmsteads, fortified monasteries, fortified communes; and a proliferation of strange cults. Eventually there might be the re-emergence of petty city states, nudging towards new trade and new wars. Or this scenario could be all wrong. Advanced economies might survive, relatively undamaged, in the Southern hemisphere: Australia, Argentina, South Africa. After an interval for stench and plague to die down, these might come back, with their muskets, to colonize the European tribes: perhaps to fight over the spoils: perhaps to establish one superpower's world dominion.

do not mean the extermination of all life. I mean only the extermination of our civilization. A balance-sheet of the last two millenia would be drawn, in every field of endeavour and of culture, and a minus sign be placed before each total.

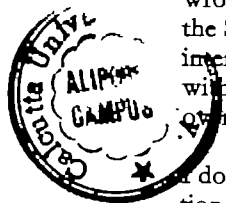
Our Opportunity

If one has come to live with this expectation, then it must modify, in profound and subtle ways, one's whole political stance. Class struggle continues, in many forms, across the globe. But exterminism itself is not a 'class issue': it is a human issue. Certain kinds of 'revolutionary' posturing and rhetoric, which inflame exterminist ideology and which carry divisions into the necessary alliances of human resistance, are luxuries which we can do without.

There are contradictions within this gathering determinism, and countervailing forces in both blocs, as to which I have said, in these notes, very little. It remains to indicate what an anti-extremist configuration of forces might look like, and what its strategy might be, if it were to stand any hope of success.

First, it would have to mobilize itself with great rapidity, since we are already within the shadow of collision. Prophecies are arbitrary: but the successful emplacement of cruise missiles on West European territories in 1983 might signal a point-of-no-return.

Second, the fracture through the heart of Europe remains the central locus of the opposed exterminist thrusts, although the second fracture in Asia (with the unpredictable presence of China) is growing in



significance.⁵⁰ Hence European Nuclear Disarmament is not a strategy for opting out of global confrontation. It strikes directly at that confrontation, by initiating a counter-thrust, a logic of process leading towards the dissolution of both blocs, the demystification of exterminism's ideological mythology, and thence permitting nations in both Eastern and Western Europe to resume autonomy and political mobility. Neutralism or non-alignment in any part of the globe are not, or are not necessarily, isolationist or 'pacifist' options: they are active interventions against exterminism's determinist pressures.

Third, this configuration must, as a matter of course, forge alliances with existing anti-imperialist and national liberation movements in every part of the world. At the same time, by strengthening the politics of non-alignment, it will develop a counter-force to the increasing militarization, in Africa and Asia, of post-revolutionary states.

Fourth—and this may be the most critical and decisive point—it must engage in delicate and non-provocative work to form alliances between the peace movement in the West and constructive elements in the Communist world (in the Soviet Union and East Europe) which confront the exterminist structures and ideology of their own nations.

This is of necessity; and without such internationalist alliances which reach across the fracture we will not succeed. The exterminist thrust (we have seen) summons up and augments the thrust of its exterminist antagonist. The counter-thrust can not come from the other, but only from within the resistance of peoples *inside each bloc*. But so long as this resistance is confined within its own bloc, it may inhibit the thrust to war but cannot finally impose alternative directions. So long as each bloc's resistance movement can be categorized as the 'ally' of the other, exterminism (with its powerful bases in the weapons-systems-and-support-complex) will be able to police its own territory, reassert ideological control, and, eventually, resume its thrust.

Hence only the regeneration of internationalism can possibly summon up a force sufficient to the need. This internationalism must be consciously anti-exterminist: it must confront the ideological imperatives of both blocs: it must embody, in its thought, in its exchanges, in its gestures, and in its symbolic expressions, the imperatives of human ecological survival. Such a movement cannot be mediated by official or quasi-official spokespersons of either bloc. (This fact was signalled by those Euro-communist parties which refused their attendance at the Paris conference in April.) The strategy of Stockholm Peace Appeals and of the World Peace Council is as dead as is the strategy (prizing open Soviet civil rights by means of US Senate resolutions) of the exile at Gorky.

Internationalism today demands unequivocal rejection of the ideology of both blocs. The rising movement in Western Europe against NATO 'modernization' must exact a real price from the Soviet ideologists and

⁵⁰ By 'locus' I do not mean that Europe is the most probable flash-point for detonation. Pakistan or the Gulf States might provide that.

military managers, in the opening of Eastern Europe to genuine exchanges and to participation in the common internationalist discourse. This must not be a hidden tactic but an open and principled strategy. This may be a most critical point in the dissolution of the exterminist field-of-force. It will be contested with equal ferocity by the ideologists of NATO and by the Communist bureaucracy and police. It will require symbolic manifestations and a stubborn internationalist morale. And it will bring friends into danger.

Finally, it should go without saying that exterminism can only be confronted by the broadest possible popular alliance: that is, by every affirmative resource in our culture. Secondary differences must be subordinated to the human ecological imperative. The immobilism sometimes found on the Marxist Left is founded on a great error: that theoretical rigour, or throwing oneself into a 'revolutionary' posture, is the end of politics. The end of politics is to act, and to act *with effect*. Those voices which pipe, in shrill tones of militancy, that 'the Bomb' (which they have not looked behind) is 'a class question'; that we must get back to the dramas of confrontation and spurn the contamination of Christians, neutralists, pacifists and other class enemies—these voices are only a falsetto descant in the choir of exterminism. Only an alliance which takes in churches, Eurocommunists, Labourists, East European dissidents (and not only 'dissidents'), Soviet citizens unmediated by Party structures, trade unionists, ecologists—only this can possibly muster the force and the internationalist élan to throw the cruise missiles and the SS-20s back.

Give us victory in this, and the world begins to move once more. Begin to break down that field-of-force, and the thirty-year-old impediments to European political mobility (East, South and West) begin to give way. Nothing will follow on easily and as a matter of course: but swing those blocs off collision-course, and the blocs themselves will begin to change. The armourers and the police will begin to lose their authority, the ideologists will lose their lines. A new space for politics will open up.

Within the threatening shadow of exterminist crisis, European consciousness is alerted, and a moment of opportunity appears. These notes are rough, and readers will wish to amend them. I ask them also to act.

Oxford University Press

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For a Return to Genuine Marxism in China

Wang Xizhe

The latest media fad in our country is a kind of 'worship' of the Gang of Four. It appears to people as if the Gang of Four were almost gods, with vast magical powers. They were capable of moving heaven and earth—they could make China change colour if they wanted to. Naturally, then, all the disasters that hit China during the last decade or so must have been their doing. If only they hadn't been here, we wouldn't have suffered so. . . . Things have even reached the point where Comrades Wan Bin and Liu Yu-cheng were obliged to stoop to this sort of worship, contrary to their own beliefs. In their essay 'Some Tentative Remarks on the Source of Problems in Democratic Life'—an essay we consider to be quite well written—they wrote that Lin Biao and the Gang of Four created feudal fascism in China.¹

Marx once commented: 'The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the Old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of an abstract general principle in the existing world. Only the one party attacks this domination as usurpation, while the other extols it as legitimate.'²

Today, a lot of our commentators would agree on one point of faith concerning the Gang of Four: namely, that a handful of people in leading roles managed to transform the character of our country overnight. (Whether they were heroes or criminals, though, depends on whom you ask.) As these commentators see it, it was not a certain set of social relations that created the Gang of Four, but rather the Gang of Four who created a certain type of social relations. This is a new brand of superstition, a new religion! People may worship benevolent gods out of love for them, or they may worship evil gods out of fear and loathing. But in either case this shows that people feel baffled and powerless in the face of seemingly supernatural alien forces.

In a society where people are no longer dominated by the products of their own creation which seem like alien forces—in other words, in a society where people are able to fully control their own destiny—it would be totally impossible for superstition to take root. And conversely, if such a ridiculous superstition as this 'Gang of Four worship' is still in vogue among our commentators today, doesn't that very fact prove that the Chinese people don't yet really, fully, control their own destiny?

¹ This essay was published in the Chinese magazine *Zhexue Yanjiu* (Philosophical Studies) No. 2 in 1979. The present translation and notes are taken from *Inter-continental Press/Inspector*, December 10, 1979.

² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, New York, 1978, p. 41.

The purpose of this article, then is to briefly examine the social relations that have given rise to such superstition, and also the necessary social conditions for eliminating it.

The Division of Labour

One of the most basic facts of life today is that people are still bound by a division of labour in the system of social production. Members of the Mahengchang Model Production Brigade may engage in a certain amount of volunteer activities, but if they start spending too much time at it society will insist (through the press) that they return to their places of production. In the same way, leading cadres may participate directly in production, but if they work too much they can actually be disciplined and forced to return to their supervisory posts. Socialism, after all, represents the elimination of classes. But the precondition for doing away with classes is abolishing the division of labour. (We understand this can only be abolition of the old type of division of labour.)

As Engels put it: 'So long as the total social labour only yields a produce which but slightly exceeds that barely necessary for the existence of all; so long, therefore, as labour engages all or almost all the time of the great majority of the members of society—so long, of necessity, this society is divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority, exclusively bound slaves to labour, arises a class freed from directly productive labour, which looks after the general affairs of society: the direction of labour, State business, law, science, art, etc. It is, therefore, the law of division of labour that lies at the basis of the division into classes'.³ But to make it possible to abolish the old division of labour requires the full development of the social forces of production under conditions of public ownership, along with the rise of a whole generation of human productive talent.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels depicted the productive forces they saw around them as colossal already—and they were talking of course about steam-powered industry. In their view, the existing forces of production—symbolized by the steam engine—already made it possible for people to construct a social system in which 'such an abundance of goods will be produced that society will be able to satisfy the needs of all its members . . . [and] in this way make it possible for its members to put their comprehensively developed faculties to full use'.⁴ This would provide the basis for abolishing the division of labour, and thus eliminating classes.

Marx and Engels even believed that the productive forces in the nineteenth century had already grown to the point where they could no longer be contained within capitalist relations of production. They stated flatly that it was possible for the capitalist mode of production to die out in that century (consistent with the principle that no social order can perish unless and until it has brought into play all the pro-

³ Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, New York, 1972, p. 60.

⁴ Engels, *Principles of Communism*, Bombay, 1969, p. 17.

ductive forces it is capable of containing). Given that steam-powered industry represented the most advanced productive forces compatible with the capitalist mode of production, and that the steam engine had already been fully developed, therefore, they reasoned, capitalism ought to perish.

Half a century later in 1895, Engels, recognizing that this had not been the case, wrote: 'History has proved us, and all who thought like us, wrong. It has made clear that the state of economic development on the [European] Continent at that time was not, by a long way, ripe for the elimination of capitalist production; it has proved this by the economic revolutions. . . .' After listing the economic transformations that had occurred in the economies of various European countries during that half century Engels noted that these had occurred 'all on a capitalist basis, which in the year 1848, therefore, still had great capacity for expansion.'⁵ (Note that 1848 was the year in which Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* had proclaimed the imminent doom of the capitalist mode of production!)

Based on this understanding, Engels wrote that in France, although the workers had been "conscious . . . of the fatal antagonism existing between their own class and the bourgeoisie, still, neither the economic progress of the country nor the intellectual development of the mass of French workers had as yet reached the stage which would have made a social reconstruction possible."⁶

What conclusion should be drawn from this? That the proletariat should sit back and wait until capitalism has fully developed all the productive forces it is capable of containing, and only then organize a revolution? Certainly not. The gradualism of the Second International was denounced by Lenin, who boldly led the October Revolution. Lenin understood that it was possible for the proletariat to seize power, and to carry out the tasks of capitalist development under its own leadership, thereby creating the material preconditions for socialism.

Socialism, however, is not just a matter of one country; socialism is a worldwide system. The material preconditions for socialism include not only highly developed productive forces, but also the world market created by capitalism, the essentially interdependent, worldwide association of humankind that Marx spoke of. Engels stated flatly that socialism could not triumph in a single country, but on the contrary had to be considered above all from the standpoint of the world market.⁷

Once the proletariat has seized power and gradually taken control of the means of production in a single economically backward country, one which occupies a subordinate position in the world market, it then has to choose between two possible courses. It can pursue a policy of

⁵ Engels, Introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*, Moscow, 1972, p. 12.

⁶ Engels, "Preface to the 1893 Italian Edition," in *The Communist Manifesto*, Moscow, 1977, p. 37.

⁷ See Engels, *Principles of Communism*, Section 19.

isolation and self-sufficiency, promoting the growth of its own natural economy—thus pushing the country backward toward a form of 'socialism' with feudal features (one which will sooner or later collapse). Or else it can pursue an open-door policy, entering the world market and achieving progress through association with all the nations of the world.

In the latter case, under conditions where the capitalist productive forces of the most advanced nations are in the dominant position internationally, production will inevitably retain some features of the capitalist mode of production. Marx wrote that the dominant mode of production is like a great, coloured light, that causes all objects of whatever colour to appear the same colour as it. It is fundamentally for this reason that socialism in the scientific sense cannot be achieved in a single, isolated country. But in view of this, what we are talking about is really a capitalist mode of production based on a system of public ownership in a single country—that is, a capitalist mode of production without capitalists. (And the state set up on that economic foundation is a sort of bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie.)

In this mode of production, the proletariat as a whole becomes in one sense its own employer, and in another sense its own employee. It is engaged in commodity production, and although on the domestic market it may be able to gear production along generally socialist lines, more or less according to a plan, nevertheless in view of the expanding and deepening links between its own commodities and the capitalist world market, this really amounts to nothing more than a special form of the capitalist mode of production. It still has to follow many of the basic rules of capitalist production. This becomes increasingly apparent as the relative weight of its commodities on the capitalist world market increases.

In his discussion of worker-owned cooperative factories within the framework of the capitalist mode of production, Marx wrote: "The cooperative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first beginnings of the new. . . . The antagonism between capital and labour is overcome within them, although only in the form of making the associated labourers their own capitalists, that is, enabling them to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour."³ Marx recognized such workers' cooperative factories as a form of 'positive elimination' of the capitalist mode of production.

Do not Russia, since the October Revolution, and China, since the victory in 1949, simply represent this form of elimination of the capitalist mode of production, on a huge scale? Viewed on a world scale, these 'socialist countries' are merely enlarged forms of workers' cooperative factories, which have arisen within the capitalist mode of production prevailing internationally. This is the point of departure for considering all the theoretical problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat. What is it in these huge workers' cooperative factories (or 'socialist countries') that determines their character? It can only be the following factors.

³ Marx, *Capital*, New York, 1967, Vol. 3, Chapter 27, p. 440.

First of all, those who manage the cooperative as representatives of the working-class collective must be democratically selected by the working class as a whole, and subject to dismissal at any time. They cannot act like masters of the working class—on the contrary they must be totally responsible to the working class.

Secondly, the wages these managers get must be the same as, or just a bit more than, those of a skilled worker.

And thirdly, the hard-and-fast division of labour between managers and workers must be eliminated, making it possible for all workers to carry out managerial and supervisory functions.

This is what we can call the lower stage of the socialist mode of production within a single country (although in fact it is merely working-class management within a special form of the capitalist mode of production). In political terms we call it the class dictatorship of the proletariat.

But this 'workers' cooperative factory,' due to its enormous scale (taking the form of a country), also entails new kinds of problems. Since, as we have indicated, the degree of development of the productive forces does not yet provide the necessary material basis for eliminating the division of labour, and since the cultural level and managerial capabilities of the proletariat as a whole are still limited, it is necessary to entrust the tasks of management to the most advanced layer of the proletariat (organized in the Communist Party).

Lenin put it this way: 'The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole'.⁹ But as Lenin noted, such a division of labour involves enormous potential dangers, since it 'is reducing the significance of Soviet power and reviving bureaucracy'.¹⁰ The great majority of the working masses do not participate in management. And since 'the exercise of a social function [is] everywhere the basis of political supremacy,'¹¹ they therefore do not participate in the dictatorship.

What can be done about this? If, indeed, the dictatorship of the advanced section of the proletariat is an unavoidable economic and political stage in the development of such a 'bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie,' then all we can do is to recognize and understand that fact. What we must examine, however, are the two possible courses of development of the dictatorship of the advanced section of the proletariat—the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

⁹ Lenin, 'Report on the Party Program' [at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), March 19, 1919], *Collected Works* Vol. 29, Moscow, 1965, p. 183. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹¹ Engels, *Aust-Diktating*, New York, 1972, p. 198.

Two Possible Courses

Clearly, once the dictatorship of the Communist Party has been established, it can go one of two ways.

One possibility is that the development of the social forces of production, and the rising cultural level and managerial capabilities of the big majority of the working masses, will be accompanied by a gradual transition from the dictatorship of the party to the organization of the proletariat as a whole, and eventually to the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹²

On the other hand, it is also possible for the dictatorship of the Communist Party to gradually break loose from control by society, and turn into a domineering force over society. What starts out as the advanced section of the proletariat (and in particular its leading organization) can become estranged from and turn against the proletariat. What starts out as the dictatorship of the advanced layer can change into a dictatorship of the 'CP bureaucrats' who cloak themselves in the banner of the Communist Party.¹³

Engels, in analyzing how the social division of labour leads to the formation of classes, described clearly 'how this independence of social functions in relation to society increased with time until it developed into domination over society: how he who was originally the servant, where conditions were favourable, changed gradually into the lord...'¹⁴

Comrade Mao Zedong was also quite concerned about the possibility of this happening once the dictatorship of the Communist Party had come into being. He warned us to beware of the formation of new aristocratic social layers, and he put forward the concept of a 'bureaucratic class.' Still it must be recognized that on the theoretical level Comrade Mao Zedong had not completely freed himself from the influence of the heroic view of history. He did not apply Lenin's concept of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat through a transition from the dictatorship of the party to the organization of the proletariat as a whole. Quite the contrary—even though Mao saw the danger of bureaucratization of the Communist Party once it took power, he nevertheless pinned his hopes for permanently maintaining a healthy party and state on the ideological quality of a few leading individuals. He considered the fate of the party and the state to depend on whether or not the top leadership was in the hands of 'true Marxists.'

This is in contrast to Lenin's view that the fate of the party and the

¹² The author notes that 'this point has been elaborated quite well by Comrade Yu Guangyuan, to whom we are indebted.' The article by Yu, comparing the writings of Lenin and Stalin on the dictatorship of the proletariat and the role of the Communist Party, appeared in the magazine *Baiku Zhishi* (Encyclopedic Knowledge), No. 1 in 1979.

¹³ See Lenin's 'Letter to G.Y. Sokolnikov' [February 22, 1922], *Collected Works* Vol. 35, Moscow, 1966, p. 549.

¹⁴ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 198.

state hinged on whether or not leadership was really in the hands of the entire proletariat as a class.

This theoretical error by Comrade Mao Zedong inevitably caused the dictatorship of the party to degenerate into a dictatorship of individual leaders. The leaders thus broke loose from control by the party and the people. They became veritable gods who could decide the fate of the people, sacred idols who lorded it over society, not tolerating the slightest irreverence. It was the new religion fostered by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four that provided the subjective conditions for this to happen. But what should we do, then, in order to set ourselves on the road from the dictatorship of the party to the organization of the proletariat as a whole, and finally to the dictatorship of the proletariat? What are the characteristics of the class dictatorship of the proletariat anyway?

As Comrade Yu Guangyuan explained quite well, we can get some clues on this by looking at socialist Yugoslavia. Let's take a look, then, at the theory and practice of Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Experience

The Yugoslav comrades are fully aware of the danger of bureaucratization under the dictatorship of the Communist Party. They understand correctly Lenin's warning about 'restoration of bureaucracy.' They don't think that Marx and Lenin's warnings about the danger of bureaucratism can be reduced 'only to the danger from distinctive characteristics of men employed in officialdom, that is, inefficiency, slowness, mercilessness, and inhuman behavior of the administrative machine.'¹⁵ Rather, they view this sort of bureaucratism as a socio-economic phenomenon.

This phenomenon occurs in a single socialist country (which we view as a tremendous workers' cooperative factory within the worldwide capitalist mode of production) when the producers are not yet really united with the means of production, and hence the means of production continue to act as an alien, opposing force to the producers. The party and the state are supposed to manage the means of production as representatives of the producers, but as Comrade Kardelj noted, 'as soon as this representative becomes independent in the management of the means of production, he ceases to be the real representative of the working masses and becomes the master over them.'¹⁶

The Yugoslav comrades don't deny the historic necessity for the party and the state to manage the means of production as representatives of the working masses during a certain stage following the victory of the revolution, in a situation where the cultural level of the working masses is still low. They consider it necessary, though, to root out any danger

¹⁵ Edward Kardelj, *The Practice of Socialist Democracy in Yugoslavia*, Yugoslav Information Center, New York, undated, p. 3.

¹⁶ Edward Kardelj, 'Report to the People's Assembly on the New Constitution,' *New Fundamental Law of Yugoslavia*, Union of Jurists' Associations, Belgrade, 1953, p. 19.

of the party and the state turning into rulers over the people, new masters of society.

From this flows the need to proceed gradually but resolutely along the road indicated by Marx and Lenin, of uniting the associated producers with the means of production, to accomplish what Lenin posed as 'transformation of the political power of working people's representatives into political power of the working people.'

On this theoretical foundation, the Yugoslav comrades have implemented three significant norms in practice:

1. Workers' management in the economic sphere;
2. Workers' self-government in the political sphere; and
3. A leading role for Communist Party members which consists not of direct administration of the society, but rather the strengthening of political ideology.

Workers' management in the economic sphere realizes in practice the ideal explained by Marx and Engels that 'all . . . branches of production are operated by society as a whole . . . and with the participation of all members of society.'¹⁷

Workers' self-government in the political sphere assures that proletarian democracy is truly the most direct democracy. And as in all socialist countries the comrades in Yugoslavia will tell you that socialist democracy is superior to even the most thoroughgoing Western-style democracy.

But on this point the Yugoslav comrades don't stop at general propaganda. Nor do they use empty propaganda to intimidate the common people who voice demands for democracy. On the contrary, they have proceeded in a realistic way to create a firm economic and organizational basis for this kind of democracy.

Socialist democracy is not something that can be bestowed on society artificially by passing some kind of law; it can only arise organically out of certain new economic relations, on a new economic foundation. It is nothing other than the political form that naturally corresponds to those new economic relations. Here we see an embryonic form of the class dictatorship of the proletariat, for in essence the dictatorship of the proletariat is merely the political expression of the organization of the entire proletariat to manage production directly.

A system of this type, in which members of the Communist Party do not take direct administrative leadership of society, but merely lead in strengthening political ideology, has prevented the bureaucratization of the party by getting to the root of the danger. It has firmed up the links between the party and the popular masses, really preserved the character of the proletarian vanguard, and consolidated the fundamental power of the popular masses as a whole. This is the basic theory and the practical experience of Yugoslavia.

¹⁷ Engels, *Principles of Communism*, p. 12.

Here we must quote briefly from a report given by Comrade Su Shaozhi after a visit to Yugoslavia. He reported that he, Li Yimin, and other comrades who had been there agreed that 'while in the thirty-two years since Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform¹⁸ there have been all kinds of polemics, still it is difficult to gauge the truth from such documents. Practice, after all, is the sole criterion of truth. One look at Yugoslavia, though, shows that they have definitely prospered, and their future is extremely bright.'

Well then, in emancipating our thinking, shouldn't we investigate for ourselves different forms of socialism and roads of socialist development? And shouldn't we learn a bit from the Yugoslav comrades? Remember how they stood up to Stalin and emancipated their thinking!

Danger of Bureaucratization in China

If we can say that the social division of labour necessitated by economic and cultural backwardness constitutes the objective condition for the danger of bureaucratization under the dictatorship of a Communist Party in general and in our country in particular, it follows that there are also subjective conditions involved. Comrades Wan Bin and Liu Yucheng have analysed this point quite well. As they put it: "The real source of the problem is that we lack a conscious understanding of the following point. The teachings of Marxism-Leninism stipulate that the proletarian state is in essence a state that has already begun to "wither away" (in the sense that power in society lies increasingly with the people themselves), and the Marxist-Leninist program calls for the complete liquidation of the old system of government functionaries. The proletarian state is still an instrument of class rule. Yet at the same time it is no longer a state in the old sense, but rather an organ of advanced democracy. In our country, however, these two aspects of the proletarian state have become divorced from each other theoretically and in practice, with emphasis on the former and disregard for the latter. As a result of this the party and state organs in our country have deviated to an extent from the teachings of Marxism on the proletarian state'.¹⁹ These are the subjective conditions underlying the danger of bureaucratization of the party.

In an effort to block its own tendency toward bureaucratization, the party is constantly carrying out purges aimed at cleansing itself and ensuring its proletarian purity. This shows the loyalty of the party to the people.

However, from a historical point of view, primary factors are ultimately decisive over secondary ones, no matter how much secondary factors

¹⁸ The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was created by Stalin in 1947 (the Comintern had been abolished as a favor to allied governments during World War II). Its original affiliates included the Communist parties of the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Italy and France. The Yugoslav CP was expelled in June 1948 at the beginning of the Tito-Stalin dispute.

¹⁹ Wan Bin and Liu Yucheng, "Some Tentative Remarks on the Source of Problems in Democratic Life," *Zhuochou Yangjin*, No. 2 in 1979.

may at times react upon and influence the primary ones. Material factors are ultimately decisive over ideas. This is a fact that can in no way be altered by anyone's subjective intentions.

If the *material roots* of the danger of bureaucratization of the party lie in the special capitalist mode of production that prevails in the so-called initial stage of socialism, then how can those who represent the relations of production in an independent capacity, and who constantly increase their independence in the course of production, possibly eliminate through purges their own tendency to become estranged from the proletariat? How can they possibly eliminate the danger of bureaucratization in any fundamental sense?

Isn't our society always calling on party cadres not to seek privileges for themselves? Aren't we constantly demanding that cadres never forget they are 'public servants'? But if in their social existence cadres see no material reason to act as servants of society, how can we expect them, in their consciousness, to remember that they are 'public servants'?

Now let's turn from the realm of theory to reality. The Tiananmen incident²⁰ gave us a glimpse of how far the party had escaped from control by the people and become a domineering force over society as a whole.

Remember all those tens of thousands of poems at the Tiananmen demonstration? Those were ballots. That demonstration was a spontaneous opinion poll, a real referendum. There, in the form of their poems, the people voted for public servants they could trust—cadres like Zhou Enlai—and at the same time sought to unseat the local despots they were saddled with. It was a courageous attempt by the people to regain control over a party and a state that had become increasingly alien to them.

In the end, however, the people found that this thing they had created had already turned into its opposite, and started to become a force ruling over them. The party suppressed the Tiananmen demonstration, and thereby proved that all the necessary social, material, and subjective conditions for such a suppression to be carried out had already matured. Thus it was not all some accidental result of a seizure of power by the Gang of Four. It was nothing other than a public revelation and confirmation—in the form of a large-scale, open clash—of the estrangement of the party from the people!

Most importantly, however, this public revelation led to a positive result—it shocked broad layers of the people, as well as quite a few genuine Marxists within the party. It left them with a burning feeling

²⁰ On April 5, 1976, as many as 100,000 demonstrators battled police in Tiananmen (Tien An Men) Square in the heart of Peking, after the authorities had removed thousands of wreaths and poems placed in the square in memory of the late Vice-Premier Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai). Zhou and the wing of the CP led by him were seen as the exponents of economic modernization. For an account of the Tiananmen incident see *Intercontinental Press*, September 27, 1976, p. 1355.

that such a thing must never be allowed to happen again, and that something had to be done to save the party!

Later on came the victory of October [1976], when the genuine Marxists within the party, representing the will of the people, totally smashed the Gang of Four. (In legal terms, they 'removed' the Gang of Four from their posts.) In the final analysis, though, this resulted not from the people's direct exercise of their right to remove officials, but rather from the genuine Marxists in the party exercising *their* right to remove them.

The victory of October thus represented not the triumph of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but merely a victory for the dictatorship of the advanced section of the proletariat—the dictatorship of the Communist Party (exercising dictatorship against the antipopular, reactionary forces within the party).

And as a result, even though the people were pleased and inspired by the victory of October, it nevertheless resulted in two different kinds of demands being raised. Some of the masses felt dissatisfied because they still lacked the material and subjective means to remove the Gang of Four directly, and so they raised democratic demands that went a step further in that direction. But on the other hand, some of the masses merely seemed to discover once more the need for a 'saviour.' These people would go around saying, 'Let's hope Uncle Deng lives to a ripe old age!' Some even offered prayers. While this was an indication of the people's love for the genuine Marxists within the party, still in the final analysis it showed how little people feel they can actually control their own destiny!

We can also look at the danger of bureaucratization from another angle. Wang Xiaoping, the main figure in the Wang Xiaoping corruption case, stated after his trial, 'This is a political frame-up! They're victimizing me in order to get at my father!' What does this remark reveal? It indicates that intraparty struggles are regarded as fights over the redistribution of property within the party. This way of thinking is apparently quite universal among rank-and-file cadres and their children today. If it weren't, how could Wang Xiaoping ever have hoped to obtain such tremendous sympathy from cadres and their children?

The present bureaucratic cadre system, based on hierarchical authority, has already caused all but a few party cadres to practically ignore the four modernizations²¹ except when it comes to fighting for wealth and power for themselves, or doing their damndest to hold onto their official salaries.

²¹ The policy of 'four modernizations' (modernizing China's industry, agriculture, science and technology, and military) was proposed by Zhou Enlai in a speech to the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975. This policy was denounced by the Mao regime after Zhou's death, but has been revived by the current leadership of Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping, which pledges to accomplish the four modernizations, thus making China into a modern developed country, by the year 2000.

The problem of cadre reassignment has already become a major brake on the four modernizations, and the voices of people demanding reform of the bureaucratic cadre system are growing stronger and stronger. An efficient cadre system—one that doesn't recognize any kind of privileged status—is essential if we are to achieve the four modernizations. Does not the continuing existence and expansion of the bureaucratic cadre system, despite the crying need for reform, pose a serious threat to our great national task?

Even since the Third Plenum of the Central Committee [in December 1978] we have often spoken of the problem of rigid, ossified thinking on the part of many people in the party. These people neither think for themselves, nor do they allow others to think. But shouldn't this sort of ossified thinking be explained in terms of these people's ossified social existence? Isn't it precisely the ossification of their social existence that leads to such an inflexible way of thinking? Their social position, after all, is nothing but a stagnant, utterly lifeless, bureaucratic existence.

Could a capitalist, who goes rushing all over the world in pursuit of profits and out of fear of competition, suffer from such ossified thinking? Could a scientist, who dares to challenge old, accepted theories despite opposition from all sides, possibly sink into such a rigid way of thinking? Cadres whose thinking has hardened into 'whatever-ism'²² are nothing other than the intellectual representatives of the forces of bureaucratic decadence within the party. They are the biggest source of inertia obstructing the progress of Chinese society today.

Haven't they simply switched from an approach of 'clinging forever to the line once set' over to 'whatever-ism'? Aren't they the ones who, when confronted by the genuine Marxists in the party and by the masses' rising outcry for reform always try to reassert and defend their own special interests by crying about the threat from those who seek to 'cut down the banner' [of Maoism]? If these people are so fond of 'the banner,' why was there not even a peep out of them when Lin Biao and the Gang of Four were busy 'cutting down the banner'?

Of course, all this is only one side of the question. We can be optimistic about the party in our country. Within the party a conscious Marxist outlook predominates, or ultimately will predominate. One proof of this is the party's resolute action in smashing the tendency to 'cling forever to the line once set,' criticizing 'whateverism,' and upholding

²² Since 1978 the Chinese press has carried on a campaign of criticism against government functionaries ('cadres') who obtained their posts under the Mao regime and now resist the implementation of new policies. The term 'whatever-ism' has been coined to ridicule those who insist that whatever Mao said must be right, despite what the facts may suggest. Other stubborn bureaucrats have been denounced for 'clinging forever to the line once set.'

Mao Zedong's ideas have also been disavowed, although this is handled more delicately than the criticism of Mao's underlings. The press has featured a discussion of philosophical principles, in which Deng Xiaoping is presented as a champion of the concept that 'practice is the sole criterion of truth.' In a country where for years Mao's writings were treated as scripture, the political implications of this phrase are unmistakable.

the banner of consistent materialism, the concept that practice is the sole criterion of truth.

The party is determined to eliminate the danger of its own bureaucratization, to follow the principled course that Marx and Lenin indicated in their writings on the Paris Commune, and thus to advance from the dictatorship of the party to the organized dictatorship of the proletariat as a whole. Haven't the efforts of leading party ideologists in the realm of philosophy already demonstrated this?

For Class Dictatorship of the Proletariat

In seeking to realize the class dictatorship of the proletariat, the biggest ideological stumbling block facing us is the conception of the leading role of the Communist Party.

This is a question that never became a problem for Marx in his time. Marx never envisioned the possibility that a socialist revolution might take place in a single, economically and culturally backward country where people were not yet capable of running the country themselves. For this reason, Marx never even imagined that within such a 'workers state' the Communist Party might take on a directly administrative leadership role, and start lording it over society.²³

In Marx and Engels' blueprint for the society of the future, all the social relations in such a 'workers state' were to be an extension of the relations of production within a workers' cooperative factory.²⁴ The new economic relations among citizens would determine the selection of administrators of the new society, who could only come from the ranks of self-governing communes. And, of course, those administrators would only be responsible to the people who elected them, never to any sort of special power ruling over society.

The question of the party's role only became a problem in Lenin's time. The problem was taken up by Lenin, who taught us that a workers' state effected on a backward economic and cultural foundation, as in Russia, would for a time have to let the advanced section of the proletariat exercise administrative and political control on behalf of the proletariat. Therefore, under the conditions prevailing at that time, Lenin proposed that no state agency not yet under party direction be allowed to resolve any major political or organizational question.

Stalin not only carried out this directive of Lenin's, he made it into an absolute rule. From that time on, the exercise of direct, administrative leadership over society as a whole by the Communist Party came to be seen as the absolute, irrevocable, one-and-only form of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a socialist country. In the early 1950s, when the Yugoslav comrades raised some disagreements, they were immediately declared heretics and excommunicated.

²³ Marx, 'The Conspectus of Bakunin's Book *State and Anarchy*,' in *Marx, Engels, and Lenin on Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Moscow, 1974, p. 148.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

But the experience and the lessons of the past sixty years teach us that this sort of theory, which views the exercise of direct administrative leadership over society as the one-and-only form of the party's leading role, is extremely harmful in practice. It is also inconsistent with Lenin's original intention, since the task that Lenin posed was precisely to 'transform political power of working people's representatives into political power of the working people.'

In fact, if all major political and organizational questions have to be settled by directives from the central party leadership, this would mean that when it came to dealing with public officials like the Gang of Four, the people would be totally powerless to do anything other than quietly await instructions from the party tops. Doesn't the bureaucratization of the Soviet Communist Party—and the danger of bureaucratization of the Chinese Communist Party—testify to this?

Our tasks, then, are to transform the dictatorship of the party into the organized dictatorship of the proletariat as a whole, to transform the party's role from one of direct administrative leadership of society into one of strong political and ideological leadership in the context of self-government in society as a whole, based on self-governing communes. (Lenin considered this kind of self-government to be the prerequisite for democratic centralism.)

But do conditions today make it possible to pose the gradual accomplishment of these tasks? Marx once said that humanity always poses only such tasks as it is capable of solving. This is so because the tasks themselves can be discovered and thought out only once the material conditions for accomplishing them already exist or at least are in the process of being formed.

In our opinion, the Tiananmen incident was one example that pointed up the material conditions which enable us to pose these tasks today.

In explaining the historical reasons why the proletarian dictatorship in its initial stage had to temporarily allow the advanced section of the proletariat to exercise dictatorship on behalf of the whole class, Lenin wrote: '... so far we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government. Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law.'²⁵

But the striking thing about the 'April 5' Movement'²⁶—and something that distinguishes it from the 'May 4 Movement'—is the fact that the vanguard and most of the activists in the Tiananmen demonstration were young workers. Isn't this a reflection of the fact that a massive, cultured, and socialist-minded industrial work force has grown up over the past generation?

²⁵ Lenin, 'Report on the Party Program,' p. 183.

²⁶ The Tiananmen demonstration of April 5, 1976 is often referred to as the 'April 5 Movement.' Since the twelve months of the Western calendar are represented by numerals in Chinese, this reference to the '4/5 Movement' calls to mind the '5/4 Movement,' which was the wave of mass protests against Japanese colonialism touched off by students in Peking on May 4, 1919.

During those dark days for the proletarian cause, in that time of crisis when politicians and theorists trembled with fear, silent as crickets on a cold night, wasn't it the young workers who boldly stepped forward, who defended the interests of the people and in so doing demonstrated their own ability to run this society?

Especially noteworthy was the fact that through the Tiananmen incident the people, acting as the makers of history and by their own creativity, revealed the secret: administrative leadership by the party is not the only form the party's leading role can take! Did not the demonstrators at Tiananmen come out under their own leadership, thanks to the exemplary action of a self-sacrificing vanguard of party members, as well as to the years of political and ideological education by the party? In its April 5 editorial this year, *People's Daily* summed it up quite well: 'The participants in the movement had been educated by the party for many years and many of the activists were party members or cadres, youth league members or outstanding young people, and quite a number of party organizations supported or organized the mass struggles. This means that, without party leadership, the April 5 Movement would not have produced such immense impact. Party leadership was embodied mainly in the correctness of its line, principles and policies and in the exemplary role played by party members.'²⁷ This is truly an important theoretical conquest!

What does it show? It shows that even when the party refrains from administrative leadership the people can still make earthshaking accomplishments under correct ideological leadership from the party.

But what about the comrades who participated in suppressing the April 5 Movement? What about those infamous hatchet men of Tiananmen Square? Hadn't they also 'been educated by the party for many years?' Weren't many of their ringleaders party members? The Tiananmen incident also shows what horrendous crimes people can commit under certain conditions (such as interference by the likes of the Gang of Four) by ignoring their consciences and blindly obeying the administrative leadership of the party.

It should also be pointed out that changes in the form of the party's leading role will not come about as the result of some discovery by theoreticians. On the contrary, they will come as the inevitable result of specific changes that are indispensable for development of the productive forces in our country. Consequently in the final analysis they cannot be subordinated to any kind of sentimental, traditional, or administrative considerations—any more than a young man who had become economically independent can be stopped from telling his parents to stop trying to run his life the way they did when he was a child.

Naturally, we don't think that the tasks of the class dictatorship of the proletariat can be posed all at once and accomplished immediately. On the contrary, they will have to be carried out gradually. The system of

²⁷ English text released by Xinhua News Agency, April 6, 1979.

economic management established by the Anshan Constitution²⁸ and known as 'workers' participation in management' (the corresponding political term would be 'workers' participation in the dictatorship') must be transformed into direct, democratic management by the workers. The class dictatorship of the proletariat can only be realized on the firmest of material foundations, under conditions of direct, democratic control of the means of production by the workers. This is what the Paris Commune sought to accomplish, and it is still the goal that every socialist loyal to the class dictatorship of the proletariat should strive for.

We have often discussed questions of democracy and the legal system. But the ideal of democracy and a legal system can be transformed from a utopia into reality only in the context of social relations based on self-governing communes.

The class dictatorship of the proletariat can only be realized in a situation where the associated workers are directly united with the means of production. Only then will the people really be able to control their own destiny. Only then will the whole web of mysterious social relations that once seemed to envelop them and dominate their lives be smashed. They will know that they have finally become true human beings, and they'll look on all forms of superstition and worship—including worship of the Gang of Four—as long-gone relics of their ignorant past.

²⁸ The Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company, said to have been written by Mao Zedong in 1960, and publicized as a guide for the operation of all industrial enterprises in China.

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Bloch's 'Traces': the philosophy of Kitsch

The title *Traces*¹ mobilizes for the purposes of philosophical theory the primary experiences derived from reading Red Indian stories. A broken twig, a foot print on the ground, speak volumes to the eagle eye of the child who speculate about them, instead of resting content with what anyone can see. There is something here, something hidden, in the midst of ordinary, unobtrusive normality: 'There's more here than meets the eye' (p. 15). What it is, no-one knows, and Bloch, taking a leaf from the book of the gnostics, suggests that it may not be there at all yet, that it may be in the process of becoming. But *il y a quelque chose qui cloche*,² and the more mysterious the source of the trace, the more persistent the feeling that something is really there. This is the point at which speculative thought seeks a foothold. As if in mockery of the dispassionate scientific reflections of phenomenology, the speculative thinker sets out in search of the ineffable, feeling his way experimentally towards an interpretation. Indefatigably, the philosophical moth flutters against the pane of glass between itself and the light. The conundrums of what Bloch once called the shape of the

unformulatable question are made to crystallize out into whatever answers they may fleetingly suggest. His traces are survivals of the ineffable experience of childhood which once upon a time communicated everything.

Many friends are quoted in the book. I would like to wager that they date from adolescence, Ludwigshafen cousins of Brecht's cronies from Augsburg, George Pflanzelt and Müllerreisert. Here they are smoking their first pipe as if it were the pipe of perpetual peace: 'Wonderful is the approach of evening, and beautiful the conversations of men among themselves.'¹ But these men come from the town of Mahagonny, from a fantasy-America, together with Old Shatterhand and Winnetou from Leonard Frank's robber-band in Würzburg, an odour more sharply redolent between the covers of a book than it ever was on the fish-laden river and the smoke-filled saloon. The adult, however, who recalled all this to mind, wants to win the game he began all those years ago, but without betraying the memory of those images to an all-too-grown-up rationality; almost every interpretation smuggles in some kind of rationalization and then rebels against it. These experiences are no more esoteric than whatever it was about the sound of Christmas bells which moved us so profoundly and which we never wholly outgrow: the feeling that this can't be all, that there must be something more than just the here and now. A promise, however deceptive, seems to have as firm a guarantee as the promise contained only in the great works of art which Bloch, who is impatient with culture, for the most part ignores in this book. Constrained by their form, all the happiness vouchsafed by works of art is inadequate, and is really no happiness at all: 'Here too things grow in more luxuriant profusion than the familiar limits of our subjectivity (and the world) permit; both immoderate fear and "unfounded" joy have repressed what caused them. They are concealed within us and have not yet gained access to the world; joy least of all, even though it is the main thing' (p. 169). Bloch's philosophy aims to capture their promise, to tear them out of their intimate petit-bourgeois cosiness with the grappling hooks of the literary buccaneer, spurning their immediate purpose and projecting what lies at hand into the supreme good, that which has never existed. Goethe's twofold division of happiness into what lies at your elbow and the bliss that soars to the empyrean is forced together again here until it reaches melting point. The happiness close at hand is only real when it is also the highest bliss, and the highest bliss is only present if it is within your grasp. Bloch's expansive gesture wants to burst out from the limits set by its origin in what lies nearest, in immediate individual experience, the psychologically contingent, the merely subjective mood. The initiate scorns to declare an interest in what permanent astonishment can tell us about the person who gazes in wonder, and turns instead to the meaning of that astonishment, regardless of how the poor, fallible individual came to his experience: 'The thing-in-itself is the objective imagination' (p. 89). The calculation makes due allowance for the fallibility of the individual. The inadequacy of the finite

¹ Ernst Bloch, *Spiritus*, Berlin, 1930.

² 'There is something amiss' (All notes have been added by the translator).

³ Brecht, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

consciousness turns the infinite, of which it is supposed to be part, into something uncertain and enigmatic; but the infinite receives a precise, compelling confirmation because the uncertainty is nothing but that same subjective inadequacy.

Thought which tracks down traces is narrative, like its apocryphal model, the adventure story of the journey to utopia, whose radiant image Bloch would like to recapture. Narrative is imposed on him as much by his theory as by his temperament. It would be a mistake to read his story as a parable. The parable's single level of meaning would destroy the tonality of Bloch's narrative whose colours can no more be found in the spectrum than can the trumpet-red of one of Perutz's thrilling novels of suspense.⁴ Instead, his aim is to make use of adventure and other outlandish occurrences to construct the truth that we do not have in our pockets. Specific analyses are few and far between; it is rather as if the devotees of Hauff's⁵ fairy stories had forgathered in a circle around someone from that Oriental corner of Swabia where there is a town called Backang and an interjection that goes 'Ah-um', and bit by bit this and that emerges; progressively, of course, with a conceptual movement which keeps mum about Hegel, but knows him backwards. Over the chasm separating a concrete datum which actually only represents the concrete, and an idea which transcends the blindness and contingency of the concrete, while remaining oblivious of its greatest merits, there echoes the emphatic voice of a man who has something special to proclaim, something different from what we have all heard before. The narrative tone provides us with the paradox of a naïve philosophy; childhood, indestructible notwithstanding all reflection, translates even the most highly mediated phenomena into the stuff of unmediated narrative. This affinity with concrete data, right down to and including the raw substrata of experience devoid of all meaning, puts Bloch's philosophy into contact with the lower depths, with sub-cultural elements, with the openly trashy, in which, as the late exponent of an anti-mythological Enlightenment, he thinks salvation can alone be found. Like poor B.B., it could be situated bag and baggage in the big cities where he belatedly tells the stories that could never be told before. The impossibility of narrating, which has condemned the heirs of the novel to produce *Kitsch*, becomes the expression of the impossible world which is to be narrated and whose possibility he wishes to proclaim. The moment we sit down, we go to meet the story-teller half-way, not knowing whether he will satisfy our expectations. In the same way, we must make allowances for a philosophy which is spoken and not written. The oratorical style inhibits responsible formulations, and Bloch's writings only become eloquent to those who do not read them as texts. The stream of narrative-thought flows along, sweeping all before it, past all arguments, captivating us as it goes. It is a form of philosophizing in which in a certain sense nothing is actually thought out; it is extremely shrewd, but not at all subtle or ingenious in a scholastic way. What echoes in the narrative voice does

⁴ Leo Perutz (1884-1958) wrote popular historical novels remarkable mainly for their emphasis on the fantastic and the uncanny.

⁵ Wilhelm Hauff (1802-1827), the author of an historical novel, *Lichtenstein*, was best known for his fairy-tales and stories, many of which have a Swabian setting.

not become the material for reflection, but is appropriated by it, and this is even and indeed particularly true of those features which it fails to permeate stylistically and melt down. To ask where the stories came from or what the story-teller was doing with them would be absurd in the light of the anonymity at two removes, the complete absorption into the truth which he intends: 'If this story is worthless, so say the story-tellers in Africa, then it belongs to the man who tells it; if it is worth anything, then it belongs to us all' (p. 158). A critic should not point out errors in them, as if they were the rectifiable mistakes of an individual, but instead should spell out the wounds of Bloch's philosophy, just as Kafka's delinquent must spell out his own.⁶

But the voice of this story-teller is anything but 'authentic' in the conventional way. Bloch's ear, which remains extraordinarily sensitive even in the midst of the raging sonorities of his prose, has noted with precision how little anything which aspired to be different would gain from that worthy concept of pure identity with self. 'A soft, richly emotional story in the musty twilight of the 19th century, with all the cheap romantic overtones of the motif of parting. Its shimmering colours show to the best advantage when bathed in half-genuine feeling. Parting is itself sentimental. But sentimental with depth, it is a tremolo hovering indistinguishably between surface and depth' (p. 90). This tremolo survives in the great popular artists of an epoch which no longer has any time for popular art; it can be heard in the vocal exaggerations of Alexander Girardi,⁷ plaintive and inauthentic like a weebegone crybaby; what was genuine about it was the false note, its lack of domestication, the echo of its own impossibility. It is above all the masses who are attracted, sometimes more than is good for them, by an exaggerated mode of expression whose excesses evoke a sense of the authentic in the mind of the average philistine. For example, there was the servant girl who destroyed the rhythm of Scheffel's⁸ verse 'Das ist im Leben hässlich eingerichtet'⁹ by changing it to 'horribly organized'. Bloch too blasts away like Scheffel's trumpeter.

Naïve philosophy disguises itself by its swagger, like a saloon-bar pianist who plays false notes on the bass, and who sits there poor, misunderstood, trying to make the astonished onlooker who stands him a beer believe he is Paderewski. It is an atmosphere like this that can be suddenly ignited by one of those philosophical aperçus which are Bloch's claim to fame: 'Even when the young musician Beethoven suddenly knew or claimed that he was a genius, he was practising a scurrilous swindle when he felt himself to be like Ludwig van Beethoven, a person he had not yet become. This piece of presumption, which was not justified by anything at the time, was needed to enable him to become Beethoven, and in the absence of the audacity, indeed

⁶ Evidently an allusion to Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* where the torture machine inscribes the victim's crimes on his body.

⁷ Girardi (1850-1918) was a celebrated Austrian comic actor.

⁸ J. V. von Scheffel (1826-86) was known chiefly for his narrative poem *The Trumpeter of Säckingen*, a romantic adventure story modelled on Heine's *Atta Troll*. The verse Adorno quotes from this work became proverbial.

⁹ Things in life are badly organized.

brazenness of such anticipations, nothing great would ever be achieved' (p. 47).

Like the pianist, popular philosophy has seen better days. Ever since it began to boast of having found the Philosopher's Stone and of having the key to a truth which would for ever remain a mystery to the majority, it has been tainted with the stigma of charlatanism. From this taint it has been absolved by Bloch. He vies with the showman from the unforgotten fairground; his voice reverberates like the juke-box in an empty saloon which is still waiting for people to show up. He scorns the jejune intellectuality which draws a veil over such things, and issues invitations to those who have been locked out by the fastidious exponents of idealist philosophy. His habit of hyperbole acts as a corrective by its implied philosophy that he does not know what he is saying, and that his truth is untruth, when measured by existing reality. It is impossible to separate the jubilant tone of the narrator from the content of his philosophy, the salvaging of appearances. Bloch's utopia makes its nest in the vacant space between appearances and that which merely exists. It may be that his objective, the experience which has never been honoured by any experience, can only be conceived in hyperbolic terms. The theoretical salvaging of appearances is at the same time Bloch's own form of self-defence. In this respect he reveals his deep-rooted affinity with the music of Mahler.

Of the whole edifice of German idealism what now remains is a sort of noise with which Bloch, a man of music and a Wagnerian, intoxicates himself. His words become heated as if he would like them to flare up for one last time in the disenchanted world; as if the hidden promise they contain had become the driving force of thought. From time to time Bloch becomes entangled in 'all that is powerful' (p. 39), he rhapsodizes about 'open and collective battles' which will 'force fate onto our side'. This strikes a discordant note in the general anti-mythological tone, in his attempt to reverse the judgment in the Icarus case. But his impulse to dispute the rights of the eternal sameness of Fate and Myth, to resist being trapped in a natural order, is in fact dependent on the latter for nourishment; it depends on the force of a drive to which philosophers have seldom allowed such free rein. Bloch's slogan of the breakthrough of the transcendental is not spiritual. He has no wish to spiritualize nature; instead he wants the spirit of utopia to create the moment in which nature, assuaged and at peace, would be free from domination, would cease to be dependent on it and could clear the way for some alternative mode of being.

In the traces which emerge from the experience of the individual consciousness, the salvaging of appearance has its centre in what Bloch's book on utopia¹⁰ termed the encounter with self. The subject, man, was not yet his true self; he becomes manifest as something which is unreal, which has not yet left the realm of the possible, but which is at the same time the reflection of what he might become. Nietzsche's idea of man as something that had to be overcome, is modulated into a non-violent key: 'for man is something which has yet to be discovered'

¹⁰ *The Spirit of Utopia* (1918).

(p. 32). Most of the stories in this volume are concerned with man's non-identity with himself, and cast a more than affectionate and understanding side-glance at wayfaring folk, fairy-tale characters, mountebanks and all those who are led astray by the dream of a better life. 'What we see here is not so much self-seeking as a love of finery, unappeased amour-propre and sheer folly. When such vain people assume aristocratic forms, they do not do so in order to kick those lower down, as would the parvenu or even the servant-as-master; nor does it even mean that they actually approve of the aristocracy, since the self-styled seigneur is not class conscious' (p. 44). On the contrary, utopia strains at the fetters of identity, sensing in it the outrage of being this particular person, and this person alone.

The Myth of Necessity

At the stage he had reached when he wrote this book thirty years ago, Bloch wilfully and bluntly juxtaposes two theories of non-identity. One is materialistic: it is the view that in a society based on universal exchange, human beings are not themselves but the agents of the laws of value; for in all previous history, which Bloch would not hesitate to call 'pre-history', mankind was only object, not subject. 'But no-one is what he means to be, much less what he represents. And it is not that they were too little, but on the contrary, they started out with too much for what they subsequently became' (p. 33). The other view is mystical: it is the belief that the empirical, psychological ego, one's character, is not the self intended for every human being, it is not that secret name whose redemption is worth seeking. Bloch's favourite metaphor for the mystical self is the house in which one would be at home, from which all alienation would be banished. But security is not to be had, there is no ontologically embellished condition in which life might be livable; all we have is a reminder of the way things should be but aren't. Bloch's traces are in complicity with happiness, but he refuses to allow this to harden out into any positive form; instead it stays open-ended, waiting for a happiness which remains in the offing and any actual happiness comes under suspicion of a breach of faith. He makes no effort to defend his dualism against the hostile critic. The sharpness of the opposition between the metaphysical self and the social self that has yet to be created declines to take cognisance of the fact that all the attributes of that absolute self derive from social and human actuality. It would be simple to convict the Hegelian Bloch of the charge of breaking off the dialectical process at a crucial point by means of a theological *comp de main*. But such a hasty criticism would evade the issue of whether dialectics can ever manage to avoid negating itself somewhere along the line; even Hegel's own dialectics had its limits, in the identity thesis. However that may be, Bloch's *comp de main* enables him to adopt an intellectual stance which normally fails to thrive in the climate of dialectics, whether idealist or materialist: nothing which exists is idolized as necessary; his speculations even launch an attack on necessity as a figuration of myth.

That narrative and argument revolve around the world of appearances stems from the fact that Bloch refuses to respect the boundary between finite and infinite, between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between

the limitations of reason and the unreality of faith. Behind every word stands his resolve to break through the solid barrier which ever since Kant common sense has inserted between consciousness and things-in-themselves. The very ratification of this barrier is assigned to the realm of ideology and is interpreted as the expression of bourgeois society's acquiescence in the reified world it has fabricated, the world of commodities, the world for the bourgeois. This is the meeting point of the positions of Bloch and Benjamin. The sheer love of freedom makes Bloch tear down all the boundary posts and in the process he does away with the now ossified 'ontological difference', so beloved of German philosophy, between essence and mere existence. In the recuperation of motifs derived from German idealism, and ultimately from Aristotle, existence becomes force, potentiality, propelled towards the absolute. Bloch's taste for cheap romance has its systematic roots, if we may be allowed the phrase, in an alliance with the lower depths, by which we mean both unformed matter and also the social strata which have to bear all the burdens. The upper reaches, however, culture, form and what he calls the 'polis'—all that is in his eyes in hopeless complicity with domination, oppression and myth—a true superstructure: only that which is pushed down to the bottom retains the potential of whatever is above it. This is why he goes foraging in the rubbish for that transcendence, the path to which is obstructed by culture as it exists. His thought functions as a corrective to contemporary philosophy, and not least because he does not think that actual reality is beneath him. He resists the modern German habit of demoting Being to a mere branch of philosophy, and so reducing the latter to the irrelevance of a resurrected formalism. He is equally reluctant to take part in the process of degrading thought to an actuality whose sole function is the mental reconstruction of reality. The base is neither volatilized, nor, as in classificatory thought, is it simply cocooned and left to its own devices. Instead, it is swept along like the thematic elements of certain types of music. Music in Bloch's thought occupies more space than in almost any other philosopher, not excluding Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It reverberates through his works like a station orchestra in your dreams; Bloch's ear has no more patience for the niceties of musical technique than he has for aesthetic discrimination. Nor is there any transition, any 'mediation' between the childish delight in a merry-go-round and its metaphysical recuperation: 'Above all, when the ship arrives with music; then we find hidden in the (unpetty-bourgeois) *Kitsch* something of the jubilation of the (possible) resurrection of the dead' (p. 165). Even in such extravagant extrapolations as this, Hegel's criticism of Kant is still tacitly presupposed, the criticism, namely, that to set limits is already to transcend them; and that if reason is going to confine itself to the finite, it must already be master of the infinite in whose name the limits are imposed. The main current of philosophical tradition distinguishes between thought and the unconditioned, but a thinker who refuses to go along with this tradition may yet be unwilling to renounce that insight—though his aim is to bring it to fruition. He does not knuckle under in despair. The triumphant note, 'Success is ours', of the last scene in *Faust*, Kant's idea of perpetual peace as a real possibility, dismisses the critical element of philosophy as prevarication and failure. Thought of this type imagines fulfilment in terms of actual delight, ἡδονή, not as a

task or an idea. To that extent it is anti-idealistic and materialist. Its materialism prevents Bloch from spinning a seamless Hegelian web composed of the identity of the subject and object, however mediated, a construct which in the last analysis insists that all objectivity should be absorbed into the subject and reduced to mere 'Spirit'. While Bloch heretically repudiates the [Kantian] barrier, he nevertheless insists, contrary to Hegel's speculative idealism, on the unreconciled distinction between immanence and transcendence, and he is as little tempted towards mediations on a large scale as he is on individual points of interpretation. The Here and Now is defined in terms of historical materialism, the yonder is glimpsed through its refractions, in terms of the traces that might be found here. Without ironing out the contradictions Bloch's thought proceeds in a manner which is at once utopian and dualistic. Because he does not conceive of utopia as a metaphysical absolute, but in terms of that theological manoeuvre in which the hungry consciousness of the living feels itself tricked by the consolidation of an idea, he is forced to think of it as something which manifests itself. It is neither true, nor is it non-existent: 'Even the most blatant mirage at least mimics, infamously and mendaciously, a splendour which nevertheless must be inherent in the tendency of life, in its bare, but real "possibilities"; for in itself a mirage is barren, and without palm trees in the remote distances of time and space there would not even be a Fata Morgana' (p. 240).

The initial situations which Bloch describes are plausible enough: 'On falling asleep most people turn their face to the wall, even though this means exposing their back to the darkened room whose familiar outlines are rapidly fading away. It is as if the wall suddenly exerted some attractive force, paralysing the room, as if sleep had discovered something in the wall which normally only befits a better death. It is as if sleep too, like interruptions and strangers, were a preparation for death; of course, the stage then takes on a different appearance, it creates the dialectical semblance of home. And in fact a dying man, who was rescued at the last moment, has explained the phenomenon in this way: "I lay down facing the wall and felt that the things outside, there in the room, no longer concerned me, but that what I was looking for was there, in the wall"' (p. 163). But Bloch himself calls the secret of the wall a dialectical semblance. He does not allow himself to be seduced into taking such insights literally. But this semblance, these appearances, are not psychological, not subjective illusion, but something objective. Just as with Benjamin and for that matter Proust, the plausibility of appearance is a sort of guarantee that the most specific experiences, experiences which melt into the particular, are transformed into the general. The narrative style of philosophy cultivated by Bloch is inspired by the presentiment that such transformations slip through the net of dialectical meditation. Even though the content owes a great conscious debt to dialectics, the style is essentially undialectical. The story Bloch has to tell is of existing things, even though their existence may still lie in the future; it is a form that pays no heed to the process of becoming, proclaimed by the content, and instead merely tries to emulate the process through its tempo. But the chances that this promise will be fulfilled are as uncertain as in any dialectical materialism. Bloch is both theologian and socialist, but he is no

religious socialist. Neither history nor any rational organization of history is credited as being meaningful on the mere authority of the fragments of meaning that haunt immanent reality and whose divine 'sparks' point to some messianic end. Positive religious dogmas are not used to justify existing reality, nor are they credited with transcendental powers. Bloch is a mystic in the paradoxical sense that he has achieved a synthesis of theology and atheism. In contrast, the mystical meditations in which the tradition of the divine spark had its roots, presupposed dogmatic teachings which they then set out to destroy by some novel interpretation; this was true both of the Jewish tradition of the Torah as a sacred text and of the Christological tradition. Mysticism which lays no claim to any core of revelation stands revealed as mere cultural reminiscence. Bloch's philosophy of appearance, for which any such authority is irretrievably *passé*, no more fears the consequences of this than did the latter-day mystics of the great religions in their enlightened end-phase. He does not postulate religion in order to construct a philosophy of religion. The contortions this leads to form the subject of his own speculations. But he would rather put up with them, he would rather think of his own philosophy as mere semblance, than lapse either into positivism or into a positive religious faith. The vulnerability this form of thought so diligently displays is a consequence of its substance. If the latter were to be perfected and represented in all its purity, then the world of appearances, in which it has its being, would be conjured away into thin air.

It is easy to point out to Bloch that absolutes cannot be perceived by relatives: his philosophy is itself not proof against the very apocryphal writings he presumes to reinstate. His stories burn up in the course of telling; when the unthought-out thought is ignited the result is a short-circuit. It is for this reason, and not through any deficient logic that the interpretations often lag so far behind the stories, like a sort of antinomian sermon on the text: Lo, I shall give you stones instead of bread. The higher he wishes to soar, the more the very effort intensifies our sense of futility. The mingling of spheres, no less characteristic of this philosophy than the dichotomy of spheres, casts a shadow over it and challenges all established ideas of pure being in itself, all Platonic ideas in short. Even though Bloch wants to maintain that the sublime and the trivial are one, a gulf opens up between them often enough and the sublime becomes trivial. 'Is it good? I asked. Children find that things taste better in other people's houses. But they soon see that all is not well there either. And if things were so lovely at home they would not be so pleased to leave. They often sense early on that both there and elsewhere much could be different' (p. 9). This is simply the platitudinous reformulation of the gnostic doctrine of the inadequacy of creation. Bloch's magisterial style does not allow itself to be thrown off balance by unconscious humour. 'At all events, it is not always the expected that knocks at the door' (p. 161). Culture is not enough for this philosophy, but on occasion proves too much for it and philosophy falls flat on its face. For just as there is nothing between heaven and earth that cannot be taken over by the psychoanalysts and given a sexual interpretation, so too there is nothing which cannot be regarded as a Blochian trace, and this indiscriminate use of everything comes close to meaning nothing. The traces are at their trickiest when they

lead to the occult: once it becomes a matter of principle that any intelligible world is fair game there is no possible antidote to the dreams of a ghost seer.¹¹

A whole host of superstitious stories are recounted; the sterility of backstairs gossip from the spirit world is indeed hastily underscored, but no adequate theoretical distinction is made between Bloch's metaphysical intentions and a metaphysics dragged down to the plane of fact. Nevertheless, even here, where the *Kitsch* threatens to engulf its saviour, there is something to be said in Bloch's favour. For it is one thing to tell ghost stories, while believing in ghosts is quite another. One is almost tempted to say that the only person who can really enjoy ghost stories is someone who does not believe in ghosts, since by entering into the stories he can more purely enjoy his freedom from the myth. This freedom is what Bloch hopes to achieve by reflecting myth through narrative and by his philosophy as a whole. The remainder of the discredited ghost stories simply expresses his astonishment at that inadequacy of the unfree world which he never tires of rehearsing. They are means of expression, and what they express is alienation.

The primacy of expression over signification, his concern not simply that words should interpret concepts, but that the concepts should make the words tell, makes it clear that Bloch's is the philosophy of Expressionism. Expressionism consists for him in the idea of breaking through the encrusted surface of life. Human immediacy wishes to make its voice heard directly: like the Expressionists, Bloch's philosophy protests against the reification of the world. Unlike the artists he cannot rest content with giving form to that which subjectivity could fill, but his thought goes beyond that and enables us to see how that immediate subjectivity is socially mediated and alienated. Moreover, unlike Lukács, the friend of his youth, he does not, in the whole course of his work, ever extinguish the moment of subjectivity in the fiction of a supposedly achieved state of reconciliation. This preserves him from a second-order reification. Thanks to the strength of his philosophical nerves he can hold fast to the point of view of subjective experience even when, in a Hegelian sense, he has transcended it theoretically. His philosophy points in the direction of objectivity, but his speech remains consistently Expressionistic. Since it is thought, it cannot remain at the level of pure unmediated utterance; but equally, it cannot eliminate subjectivity as the ground of knowledge and as the source of language, for there is no objective order of being which could incorporate the subjective within itself without contradiction and whose language would be identical with his own. Bloch's thought cannot spare itself the bitter experience that, at the present time, any philosophical attempt to transcend the subjective lapses into the stage of presubjectivity, and hence acts in favour of a collective order in which subjectivity is not protected but merely held down by external force. His perennial Expressionism is a strident refusal to accept that reification, too, is perennial, and that the claim that it has been abolished is no more than an ideological gesture. The dislocations in his speech are the echo of an historical conjuncture in which any philosophy of

¹¹ *Dreams of a Ghost Seer* is the title of Kant's pamphlet against Swedenborg.

subject and object is condemned to proclaim the enduring gap between subject and object.

The Miner and the Millionaire

Its innermost theme is something it shares with literary Expressionism. We recall a sentence by George Heym¹² 'It could perhaps be said that my poetry is the best proof of the existence of a metaphysical land whose blackened peninsulas extend deeply into our transient days'; a land whose topography was charted in the works of Rimbaud. In Bloch the wish to provide such proof is to be taken seriously; that land is to be retrieved conceptually. It is this that distinguishes his metaphysics from the traditional pattern. Even though the question of the nature of Being, the true essence of things, of God, freedom and immortality is still ubiquitously present, it cannot be reduced to such issues: its aim instead is to describe, or as Schelling would say 'construct', that alternative realm. This metaphysics is the phenomenology of the imaginary. The transcendental has been secularized and is thought of as a 'space'. And the reason why it is so hard to distinguish between it and spiritualist romances from the fourth dimension is that since it has been stripped of every connection with existence it becomes a symbol and his transcendental realm becomes an idea. In consequence, his philosophy returns to the prison of the very idealism from which it was designed to escape. 'This space, it appears to me, is always around us, even when we can only feel its edges and no longer notice how dark the night is' (p. 183). It is into this space that Bloch's 'motifs of disappearance' wish to usher us. Dying becomes a gateway, as in certain moments in Bach. 'Even the nothingness that the incredulous foist on us is unimaginable, even more obscure indeed than the idea of a possible survival' (p. 196). Bloch's obsession with the quasi-existence of the imaginary is the source of the remarkably static nature of his thought, at the heart of all his dynamism; it is the paradox of an Expressionist epic. It also explains the surplus of purblind, unresolved material. On occasion it reads more like Schelling than Hegel, more like the pseudo-morphogenesis of dialectics than dialectics itself. Dialectics would be unlikely to stop short at a dualistic theory of the world reminiscent of [Schelling's] system of ontological strata; nor would it content itself with the chiliastic antithesis of immanent utopia and a revealed transcendental sphere. Bloch, however, tells the anecdote of a young worker who is temporarily given a luxurious life by a benefactor who then sends him back down the mine, whereupon the worker kills him. Bloch comments: 'Life plays with us and in doing so does it behave differently from that kind millionaire? It is true that such a man is removable, and so the worker shot him; the merely social fate that the wealthy class imposes on the poor is likewise removable. But the rich man nevertheless stands as a sort of idol of that other fate, our natural one which ends in death, whose brutality the rich devil impersonates and incarnates until he falls victim to it himself' (p. 50f.). Or in another variation: '... death, which never is nor by definition can be the right death for us (since our proper space is in life or something more but never less than life)—even death has something of that rich cat which

¹² A poet of the first Expressionist generation, 1887-1912.

first lets the mouse run awhile before eating it up. No-one could take it amiss if a "Saint" were to shoot God down, as the worker shot the millionaire' (p. 51f.). Bloch constructs a grinning antinomian analogy between the fact of social repression and the mythic reality of a life doomed to death; but the Platonic choir is as remote as ever and the establishment of a rational order on earth would be no more than a drop of water on the molten rock of fate and death. The incorrigible naiveté which renders him impervious to argument makes him an easy target from opposing sides, both for the exponents of dialectical materialism and for the philosophers of Being as the meaning of what exists. As with every advanced philosophy which always gets stuck behind the very position it has superseded, there is something crude and unrefined about Bloch that distinguishes him from the sophistications of official philosophy, a jungle-like quality which sets him apart from the aseptic administrative approach which neatly pigeon-holes everything. The result is that he sabotages his own acceptance by the cultural establishment, but at the same time smoothes the way for an apocryphal, cult status.

The all-too architectonic scheme leaves its imprint on the ideas. Even though Bloch's philosophy abounds in materials and colours, it does not succeed in escaping from abstraction. Both its variety and its emphasis on particulars serve in great measure as exemplifications of the single idea of utopia and breakthrough, an idea he cherishes as dearly as Schopenhauer had cherished *his* insight: 'For in the final analysis everything you encounter and think of is the same' (p. 16). Utopia has to be distilled into a universal concept that subsumes all the concrete data which alone could be utopian. The 'shape of the unformulatable question' is made into a system and allows itself to be impressed by the grandiose in a manner which chimes ill with Bloch's rebellion against the power and the glory. System and appearances work together in harmony. The universal concept which obliterates the trace and which can scarcely incorporate it in itself is nevertheless forced to speak as if it were present within it. The universal concept is thereby doomed perpetually to exceed its own capacities. This drowns out the Expressionist din: the violent efforts of will without which no trace can be discerned thwarts his overall aim. For by its very nature a trace is the involuntary, the unobtrusive and the unintended. Its reduction to something intended violates it, just as on Hegel's account of phenomenology, examples violate the nature of dialectics. The colour that Bloch intends becomes grey in its totality. Hope is not a principle. But colour must not be allowed to reduce philosophy to silence. Philosophy may not move in the medium of thought and abstraction and then refuse to confront the implications of such movements.

For in that case its ideas would be conundrums. This was the solution which Benjamin chose in *One-Way Street*, a work closely related to *Traces* in many ways. Like Benjamin's book Bloch's traces, even down to their titles, sympathize with the microscopic. However, unlike Benjamin, Bloch does not surrender wholly to detail, but uses it quite intentionally (see p. 66f.) as a category. Even the microscopic remains abstract, too big for its own boots. He resists the fragmentary. Like

Hegel, he advanced dynamically, transcending the very substance on which his experience feeds. To that extent he is an idealist despite himself. As an older philosopher once put it, his thought aims to strike roots in mid-air, it wishes to be the ultimate philosophy yet retains the structure of the first philosophy, while his ambition is to grasp the whole world. He conceives of the end-product as the ground of the world, something which moves whatever exists, while dwelling within it as its ultimate purpose. He makes the last into the first. This is his innermost, irredeemable antinomy. This too he shares with Schelling.

The idea of the repressed, of the pressures from below which will put an end to the mischief, is political. This too he talks about as if it were all a foregone conclusion; changing the world is a fixed premise, regardless of what has happened to all the traces of revolution in the 30 years since the first publication, and regardless of the effects of social and technological developments on both the notion and possibility of revolution. For him it is enough to note the absurdity of the existing order; he refuses to squabble about what ought to happen. 'In the rue Blondel a drunken woman was lying in the street. A policeman tackles her. *Je suis pauvre*, says the woman. That's no reason for vomiting on the pavement, shouts the policeman. *Que voulez-vous, Monsieur, la pauvreté, c'est déjà à moitié la santé*, the woman replies and goes on drinking. With these words she described, explained and justified herself at a stroke. Whom or what should the policeman have arrested?' (p. 17). Bloch has the strength not to quibble about what is reasonable; but this goes hand in hand with the tendency to beg the question of politics, a procedure which can be exploited at moments when world history is declared to be at an end, a foregone conclusion. At the same time Bloch does not allow himself to be tamed by the repressive and the authoritarian. He is one of the very few philosophers who do not blench at the thought of a world free from both domination and hierarchy. It is inconceivable that he might deprecate the abolition of evil, sin and death from some approved vantage-point. The fact that it has not been possible to abolish evil hitherto does not lead him to the perfidious conclusion that it could and should not be done. This endows his promise, his celebration of a happy end with the feeling that despite everything all is not in vain. His traces have nothing mouldy or mildewed about them. As a heretical dialectician he refuses to let himself be fobbed off with the materialist thesis that it is wrong to try and describe a classless society. With an unwavering sensuousness he takes pleasure in imagining it, though without overdoing it. The sight of a French workman eating lobster or the popular festivities on the 14th July reflect the glow 'of a time to come when money will have stopped barking for goods or frolicking in them' (p. 19). Nor does he reel off the whole abracadabra of the immediate unity of theory and practice. To the question 'Ought we to think or to act?' he replies, 'Philosophy won't keep the wolf from the door, so it is thought. But that, as Hegel pointed out, is not its task. For it is philosophy that creates the world in which things can be transformed and not just botched' (p. 261). No more apt retort to vulgar materialism could be made by a real humanism which allows thought its due at a time when it is being universally reduced to a mere adjunct of action. Even today such a

humanism makes possible what Benjamin once said of Bloch, namely that he could warm himself at his thoughts. They are indeed like those great green-tiled ovens that are heated from outside and suffice for the whole house, comfortably powerful, without the need for a fireside seat and without smoking out the room. The man who tells fairy-tales preserves them from the humiliation of outliving their time. His expectation that something is coming is combined with a bottomless scepticism. Both are united in a joke from a Jewish legend. Someone tells of a miracle he has experienced and then denies it at the moment of greatest excitement: 'And what does God do about it all? There's no truth in the entire story' (p. 253).¹³ Bloch spares us further exegesis, but adds, 'Not bad for a liar, not a bad universal motto, better people might say' (Ibid.). And what does God do about it all?—the sloppy question masks the persistent doubt in His existence, because 'there is no truth in the entire story', because, *pace* Hegel and the whole dialectic, the history of the world is still not the history of truth even now. Thanks to the joke, philosophy can see through its own deception, and this makes it greater than itself: 'One must be both witty and able to transcend reality' (Ibid.). The joke opens up the awe-inspiring perspective contained in Karl Kraus's lines: 'Nothing is true/And perhaps other things will happen'; it may well be that the appearances dispelled by the joke may not in fact contain the last word. Even where philosophy has not succeeded, it has no need to allow itself to be decied just because men have not yet succeeded either.

Translated by Rodney Livingstone

¹³ The story is told by a man recalling his journey in the North of Siberia. He tells of wolves, runaway homes, cracking ice, the whole sleigh sinking in the lake—and? the audience asks with bated breath, as the man falls silent, he cannot utter another word, his mouth is full of water, he has long since drowned—and? says the traveller, breathing a sigh of relief: 'and what does God do about it all? There's no truth in the entire story.'

PETER STRUVE 1870–1944

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The New Left and the Present Crisis

This paper is a reflection on the present condition of the Left, and on its recent history. It is meant to address our current situation, and indeed to suggest action, but I have not found it possible to do this without thinking about previous initiatives of the earlier new left, and comparing them with the theory and practice of later tendencies. I regret that this may make the argument seem rather obsessively preoccupied with this recent past, both for those who did not experience it, and for those who did but who no longer regard it as an instructive reference point. Others have remained more in touch with active currents of thought and organization than I have, and the perspective of a Rip Van Winkle may or may not be politically illuminating. However, while the differences between 'early' and 'late' new left positions are very important to this argument, they are not presented in a spirit of recrimination. What are now required are new initiatives, drawing on the whole of our political experience. As I hope the argument will make clear I think there have been indispensable contributions in recent years even from tendencies with whose overall political

direction I have strongly disagreed. The politics of the left in Britain at the present time give one some sense of *détresse*. This is not because of the nature of the present political crisis, which is qualitatively different, and worse, than any faced by this society since the war. Inasmuch as new political initiatives on the left have previously emerged in response to crises, as with Suez, Hungary and Vietnam, we must hope that the more local threat to the post-war political truce in Britain will make possible some comparable reaction of outrage. What is repetitious is the experience of the left itself, in the familiar career of a defeated Labour Government, in the response to its failure by the Labour left, and more encouragingly in the response of tendencies that one can identify as of the 'new left'.

The Challenge of the Labour Left

The Labour Government of 1974-79 failed in ways somewhat similar to the failure of its predecessor of 1964-70. In each case, a Government founded on a pervasive but weakly-based and untheorized radical mood abandoned its more radical strategies of economic intervention (the National Plan in 1964, Planning Agreements in 1974) under the pressure of local and international capital. Both Governments accepted a curtailment of their more radical economic options, and finished up with the control of labour via industrial legislation (*In Place of Strife*), in 1969, and incomes policy (the five percent pay limit), in 1979, as their sole remaining economic remedy. Where even a strong government of the centre might have sought to combine (a) control of capital at home, (b) assertion of national interests against foreign capital via devaluation, import controls, or insistence on independence vis-à-vis the EEC., and (c) the incorporation of trade unions into economic planning, this government displaced the entire weight of economic adjustment on to labour. In neither case did Labour's electorate tolerate the consequent failure to deliver economic progress. And defining the unions in each case as being principally to blame for Britain's economic problem was naturally a position more effectively taken up and argued by the Tories. It seems unlikely that Labour Governments can ever retain power in elections if they cast their organized supporters in the role of the main source of their own and the country's difficulties. One of the few positive reasons for hoping for their victory in 1979 was the hope that the trade unions, thus vindicated by the electorate, might have been more forceful in pressing their own alternative economic strategy on a Government whose incomes policy they had just broken.¹

On the Labour left, in each case, the argument was made after the Labour Government's fall that more left wing policies were needed. Clearly as an argument about alternative ways of conducting an election this is not very convincing as far as 1979 was concerned; the damage was done long before the election was announced. As an argument about how the Government was conducted, it is a different matter. But

¹ An article by Leo Panitch, 'Socialists and the Labour Party: a Reappraisal', in R. Milliband and J. Saville (eds) *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, 1979, offers a gloomy account however of the incapacity of the trade unions to assert alternative economic policies against the will of Labour governments, especially the last.

though valid, the argument is regrettably limited in scope. Since the 1979 election, the left has sought to increase its relative leverage over the leadership and party policy, on the grounds that if its constitutional powers were greater, the Party leadership might be better controlled in future. There is a proper recognition in this that organization has got something to do with the problem. But the argument is characteristically superficial. Increasing the influence of the existing Party membership over reselection of MP's., over the election of the leader, and, through the National Executive Committee, over the election manifesto of the Party does not begin to get to the roots of the recent failures. It is no longer true, if it ever was, that merely increasing the relative strength of the existing left-wing membership of the Labour Party will suffice to create the conditions for a different outcome to a Labour Government's election than has been achieved since 1964. This is regardless of the merits of the particular proposals now causing such bitter argument, which, with modifications, are in themselves no doubt to be supported.

The choice of the ground of the constitution of the Party on which to have the post-election argument was already an indication of the gravest weakness in the analysis and strategic grasp of the Labour left. A similar battle was misfought on this ground in 1960-61, after the CND unilateral disarmament victory at the Labour Party Conference. While Gaitskell 'fought and fought and fought again', the Labour Left conducted its resistance on the principle of respect for conference decisions. The argument and sentiment which had won the original victory were thus pushed to the margin, and with them the much larger body of extra-party support which had created the whole climate of the debate, and made possible its outcome. People are only interested in the sovereignty of Conference decisions if they are already deeply committed to the party apparatus whose conference it is, and there have never been enough of these to sustain a major swing of political direction in the Labour Party, in isolation. The truth of the matter is that there are not enough left wing activists in the Labour Party, or indeed outside, to make possible a sustained political advance to the left. It is only the involvement and mobilization of people currently not active in the Labour Party which can lastingly affect the balance of argument within it, and of people not now active in left wing politics at all which can affect the balance of political conviction in the country as a whole. There is even quite a lot to be said, on this point alone, for the arguments of Labour Party right wingers that if there is to be greater involvement of party members in selection of MP's and so on, it should be of *all* party members, not merely the regular attenders of ward and general management committee meetings. Between the 'iron law of oligarchy' which confers power on the Parliamentary Labour Party and its leadership, and the lesser law of oligarchy which would confer power on the present number of party militants, there is something to choose, but not enough; it is the mobilization of a larger membership that is required, not merely strengthening the power of present activists. Thinking needs to be much more outward-looking than this. As the Labour vote steadily declines, election by election, and as Party membership similarly dwindles, it becomes insufficient to fight for control over what remains. And besides, if there were as

little support as there is now for a left that was victorious in this constitutional struggle, there is little chance that its continued dominance could be sustained. The prominence accorded to 'moderate' political leaders, and the amplification of their positions through the mass media, will ensure their triumph unless the wider terrain of political argument is changed. Unfortunately, constitutionalism within the Party is the equivalent of parliamentarism within the State, in its inhibiting effects on political understanding and action.

The Transformation of the New Left

A second area in which a recapitulation of past themes is now becoming evident is in the discussion of what used to be called the 'extra-parliamentary movement' and its importance. An eloquent and accurate critique of Leninism, and sectarian forms of organization, has been presented, in *Beyond the Fragments*,² by Sheila Rowbotham, Hilary Wainwright, and Lynne Segal, and this argument rediscovers many of the insights and positions of the various earlier versions of the new left, though now with a significant rootedness in the experience of the feminist movement. The arguments of the three contributions to this book are critical both of Labourism and its limitations, and especially of the political assumptions and organization of the Communist Party and Trotskyist sects of the time, and the somewhat different form of democratic centralism practised, as the unlikely figure of R.H.S. Crossman³ pointed out, in the Labour Party. *Beyond the Fragments* identifies the need for a politics of 'linkage', recognizing the weakness of single-issue movements, and of wholly locally-based groups, from hard personal experience. It argues for some form of non-sectarian, federal, and tolerant association of socialists, to try to make common political sense and strategy out of their different experiences of oppression and conflict. It is a lucid, appropriately personal, and most hopeful and constructive statement.

We do however have to recall, on reading it, that we have been there, that is to say at this point of realization and commitment, twice before. In 1956 and for about five or six years afterwards, the first 'new left' tried to create such an open, unsectarian and broadly-based politics of the left, outside the framework of the existing parties and groups. It was, of course, at the beginning of the post-ice age, modern period of the left in Britain, and, despite CND and the cultural renaissance of the left, the resources that were catalysed (often of currents of feeling and thought that seemed to have been dormant since the 1930's) were then relatively small.

It is now history that this tendency failed as a political movement, though echoes of the failure and the disagreements that went into it are still remarkably resonant, for example in controversy emanating from Edward Thompson. While the original tendency was exceedingly fertile

² Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, and Hilary Wainwright: *Beyond the Fragments*, Merlin Press, 1979.

³ In R.H.S. Crossman, Introduction to *The British Constitution*, by Walter Bagshot, pages 41-2, London 1964.

in ideas, and in subsequent, especially cultural, forms of activity (the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and History Workshop being examples of more or less direct progeny) no lasting political organization developed from it. The succession of Perry Anderson to the editorship of *New Left Review* in 1962, and the complete replacement of its editorial board, was accompanied by the abandonment of the *Review*'s ventures into loosely-conceived 'movement' politics, which were in any case in no very vigorous condition by this time.

In the years after 1962, a new orthodoxy of the new left gradually gained sway. Just as the failures of the Labour movement in general in Britain were attributed by Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn⁴ substantially to the ideological realm, that is to the failure to develop and implant a coherent Marxism into the British working class movement, so the failure of the earlier new left also came to be interpreted as a theoretical failure. *New Left Review*, under its new editorial team, began an ambitious programme to introduce to the British left many currents and individual works of European Marxist thought hitherto hardly known. There was an effective and single-minded programme of ideological regeneration set in train, which had a marked influence on the earlier generation of the new left of 1956 (on Raymond Williams, for example, as the evolution of his work makes clear, and on Stuart Hall), even, it has to be said, on those few like Edward Thompson who vehemently proclaim their hostility to this 'theoreticist' current. The demonstration by Edward Thompson and his historian colleagues⁵ of the ambiguous functions of law in British history seems to some observers to be convergent with more abstract theoretical debates about relative autonomy and the functional or hegemonic importance of ideology and culture, though of course antithetical in its idiom and rhetoric. This programme has of course engendered a flowering of Marxist scholarship, publishing, and not least reading, and many academic disciplines which had not heard of Marxism for some years as anything more than a significant opponent, or as a wholly negative case, have developed flourishing schools of Marxist intellectuals—sociology, literature, economics and philosophy are examples.

The political correlative of this subscription to a programme of theoretical development within a marked-out field of Marxism was the dominance, in a rather weak field, of Leninist models of political organization. Not only was ideology pressed to become relatively purified and rigorous, but political organization was formed in as rigorously class-specific a way as possible. While broad campaigns and upsurges of radical feeling took place (in 1968 in the Universities and in the anti-Vietnam War campaign for example) the main organizing agencies in these movements turned out to be the Trotskyist groups (the NMG and the IS/SWP) and the Communist Party itself. The Vietnam campaign was a complex campaign including many survivors of the peace movement, but here the eventual dominance of the 'victory for the NLF'

⁴ See the essays by them in *Towards Socialism*, edited P. Anderson and R. Blackburn, London 1965.

⁵ Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson, *Albion's Fatal Tree*, London 1975.

over the 'American withdrawal' fractions signified an important shift. Thus both at the ideological and at the organizational levels, a pure politics of class were attempted. *New Left Review* gave only an uncertain, intermittent and aloof support to the political efforts of sectarian Marxists—there has been a continuing strain in the minds of the *New Left Review* editors between their intellectual fastidiousness on the one hand and their sense of militant duty on the other. But it is important to see that the thrusts towards a more rigorous and self-contained Marxism, and towards vanguard politics, are mutually consistent, even though the activities are different in their style and in their recruitment. 'Substitutionism' and 'ultra-leftism' follow inevitably from a pure politics of class, in a setting where the actual working class movement is more trade unionist than socialist, and where Marxism provides only a small leavening element in working class ideology.

Purism of Theory and Class

Both of these aspects of the late new left we can describe as radically anti-populist: the earlier new left was strongly criticized by both vanguardist and theoreticist groups for its loose popular rhetoric. Both *New Left Review* and the Trotskyists deplored the new left's earlier flirtation with 'middle class' issues, and the commitment to a more rigorous class ideology was held to be incompatible with the idiom of 'ordinariness' used by Williams and Hoggart, and of 'the people' so often invoked by Thompson.⁶ While a critical detachment was maintained in the face of this new development by nearly all of the earlier new left generation, it became widely felt among them that there was, nevertheless, a good deal to be learned from the new attention to, and availability of, Marxist theory; though the way that theory was assimilated, for example in Stuart Hall's work, shows continuing and important reservations especially towards notions of theoretical purity. While the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has in the last few years come to be cast in an undoubtedly Marxist framework, it has nevertheless drawn heavily upon several important non-Marxist theoretical traditions. These, notably subcultural interactionism and structural linguistics and semiotics,⁷ as well as the Centre's initial applications to popular culture of English literary-critical methods, have been used to address cultural phenomena not attended to within received Marxism at all. Such theoretical eclecticism has always been associated in the history of the new left with various forms of political populism and revisionism. In seeking to make a politics that would include experiences excluded by orthodox Marxist or social democratic definitions, the writers of the new left were obliged to conduct theoretical explorations that were equally open. This was a reason for the evocation by Edward Thompson and his fellow historians of popular political traditions more deeply based than Marxism. Similarly, Raymond Williams' 'Long revolution' was an eloquent

⁶ See for example the essays by Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart in *Consciousness*, edited by Norman MacKenzie, London 1958.

⁷ See S. Hall, et al., *Resistance through Rituals*, Hutchinson, 1977, for the first, and articles in *Cultural Studies* 9, 1978, for the second.

accommodation of revolutionary and gradualist perspectives in a single phrase, arising from the tacit recognition that much active radical politics in Britain had not been revolutionary in any simple political sense. Also, Raymond Williams' fundamental rethinking of the received British Marxist theory of culture arose from the wish to admit the relevance of a rooted cultural resistance to capitalism in Britain, over the whole period of industrialization. The new left's concern over cultural definitions as a whole identified, as *Universities and Left Review* and the work of Stuart Hall made especially clear, both the importance of communications in modern capitalism, and the potential of new sub-cultural expressions of resistance to it. Theory and politics are thus inextricably linked. It is ironic, given this intellectual history, that the most significant acknowledgment of the supposed correctness, in the end, of a part of the later *New Left Review's* political orientation has come now from Raymond Williams, in the last chapter of *Politics and Letters*,⁸ his interview with *New Left Review*. Here, though in a rather qualified and reluctant way, he describes the resolution of his long uncertainty about the possibilities of evolutionary and revolutionary roads to socialism, in favour of the latter. It seems to me that this definition inevitably closes down more ways of working than it opens, and is unfortunate at a time when the earlier political positions need urgently to be reasserted again and one hopes, in the light of what has happened in between, in a more developed and sustained way. However, one can hardly rationally prescribe such optimism to anyone.

Early in this period of gathering strength of the new Marxist political and cultural current, there was an attempted recreation of the earlier new left positions, this time not as an intellectual renaissance and programme, but as a specific political initiative. This was the *May Day Manifesto*⁹ of 1967. This document tried to link the experience of 'single issue politics' in the 1960's to an analysis of the contradictions of capitalism both in Britain and internationally, arguing for the necessary connection of these various campaigns in some unified movement. Where the earlier new left had announced the various new issues of affluent politics, one by one (youth, communications, nuclear armaments, the quality of work, planning, community, popular and committed arts, for example), and had catalysed or helped their subsequent development as fields of political work, the *Manifesto* tried to synthesize these into a unified programme. In its recognition of the gulfs between the different political constituencies moved by these issues, and the 'uneven development' of late capitalism and the contradictions this signified, the *Manifesto's* analysis made some ground. The problem of the new left had always been to link two quite different political experiences, what one might unkindly describe as those of the cultural middle class radicalisms of affluence, and the socialist traditions of the older working class communities threatened by 'modernization', and the *Manifesto* made an explicit attempt theoretically and politically to link these two streams. It was, of course, born of what has become a

⁸ Raymond Williams: *Politics and Letters*, NLB, 1979.

⁹ Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson, Stuart Hall (editors): *The May Day Manifesto*, 1967. A re-written and lengthened edition was published by Penguin Books, edited by Raymond Williams, in 1968. The writer of this article was secretary of the May Day Manifesto Committee.

familiar indignation with Labour government betrayals, though perhaps in the most recent episode of Labour in power the sense of unavoidable pressure and defeat has made indignation a less vigorous emotion. The *Manifesto* initiative attracted just enough attention from various quarters to make its initiators realize that it was regarded as a possible threat, and did crystallize a non-aligned opposition to the Wilson Government's retreats. (The rather high level of official tolerance of academic Marxism over the past few years¹⁰ might on the other hand be taken as indicator that the political threat it is thought to pose is relatively slight, to anyone.) But the May Day Manifesto movement that was set up, though it gave some temporary sense of political connection to some community action groups, really made little progress before it was polarized around the issue of independent electoral intervention, and broke up.¹¹ An attempt at the same time to establish a more formal kind of left unity, through the National Convention of the Left, also failed, on the same issue, a critical problem being the underlying immobilism of the Communist Party where openness to revisionism and movement had been considerably overestimated by the Convention's initiators. (This, despite the experience of outward-facing activities such as the Communist University of London in recent years, seems a perennial problem.) This small active grouping consisting of a leadership of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Edward Thompson, and a younger following of intellectual activists, failed to estimate realistically what modest development it might have been capable of sustaining, and its efforts were therefore somewhat diffused. It also suffered from a contradiction which has beset the new left since 1956, which is that its primarily intellectual membership will not, for reasons of inclination and professional commitments, give sufficient priority to the needs of politics and organization over those of ideas. Perhaps the fundamental blow to the development of this tendency, with its second-generation new left following, was the 1968 student upsurge, in whose euphoria and militancy this more gradualist and long-term vision was uncomfortably drowned. 1968 in fact marked the watershed of a politics of radical separatism of the left, deliberately severing its ties with the reformists and consensual politics of Labourism, where the earlier new left and the *May Day Manifesto* had always sought to keep these connections open. The earlier new left had sought to influence the politics of moral protest, especially the nuclear disarmament campaign, and to provide some intellectual resources for the left in the Labour Party, even seeking to intervene through a regular presence at Party Conferences. There is an important difference between a politics where it is still expected that protests and appeals may be heard, which is based on indignation that apparently shared values are being betrayed, and a politics which rejects such appeals and the values they evoke as a bourgeois delusion, to be exploited, perhaps, but never even partially believed in.

The Ideological Success of the Right

One has to come to some estimate of the effects of the defeat of the

¹⁰ The rather limited impact of Professor Gould's attack seems to me to support rather than refute this view of the situation, up to now.

¹¹ Raymond Williams also discusses this experience in *Politics and Letters*, op. cit.

populist stream of the earlier new left, and the corresponding victory of its more class-specific and ideologically purist successor. My own estimation would be that despite a considerable intellectual and cultural vigour on the left, the *political* gains of ideological purity have been exceedingly few. While there were hopes of a new class militancy aroused especially by the miners' strikes and industrial legislation disputes of the early 1970's, this mood was not in practice sustained, and instead a Labour Government was able to invoke and then betray the loyalty of its trade union supporters, during the years of incomes policy of the 1974-79 Government. There has been a victory of a newly-resurgent conservatism, combining as Andrew Gamble has pointed out¹² commitment to a monetarist restoration of the 'free' market disciplined so far as labour is concerned by unemployment, and to authoritarian forms of social control. This victory was long prepared, by twenty years of intellectual research and publicity by the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies, and by years of anti-liberal campaigning by groups such as Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association, The Black Paper group, the Festival of Light, and the anti-Abortion Campaign. This regeneration of the right is much too general an international phenomenon to be blamed on the failures of the new left, of course, though one thinks of the success of Proposition Thirteen and an equivalent failure of 'the movement' in the United States. Nevertheless, the temporary or permanent victory of this radical conservatism has been achieved as a result of the uncontested collapse of the political centre and the stance of separatist leftism may share some responsibility for that. The intellectual thrust of much Marxist writing, for example in the social sciences and in *New Left Review*, has been specifically directed against Fabianism, centrism and reformism, as if they were the principal obstructions to progress. While the 'the consensus' held, this may well have seemed the case. It is understandable how socialists brought up during the years of mixed-economy reformist prosperity, as the period from the mid-fifties to the late nineteen sixties now appears retrospectively to have been, should have taken the centre's hegemony for granted and assumed that any critique of it from the Left must be beneficial. For a time the reformist face of capitalism seemed so persuasive that counter-revolution seemed inconceivable. But the effect of this systematic rejection of reformist and Fabian positions, in the areas of education, penal policy and welfare, for example, where welfare compromises were widely rejected by radical academics as merely modes of capitalist reproduction, has been to leave the centre to disintegrate without a struggle. Only now is it realized how much worse genuine reaction can be than the compromises which were previously achieved in alliance with the centre. The discrediting of welfare reformism, and the failure to maintain much belief in its further potential, has surely helped to clear the way for the attack on it from the right. Certainly the ever-weakening intellectual basis of Labour Government programmes from 1964 has contributed to their drift and disintegration.

Part of the isolation of single issue campaigns and their lack of a coherent political perspective, which was correctly lamented both by

¹² In R. Milliband and J. Saville (eds). *The Socialist Register* 1979.

the *May Day Manifesto* authors of 1967 and by the *Beyond the Fragments* writers of 1979, has resulted from the defeat of the more populist and open politics that might have joined them, after 1962. One can overdraw this position, and underestimate the engagement in both single-issue or local campaigns and more general socialist struggles. Through all this period the feminist movement has developed in what one can describe as an exemplary populist mode, socialists remaining committed within it to maintaining dialogue on the widest possible basis, and on the whole successfully keeping at bay the divisive efforts of their sectarian feminist comrades. Nevertheless, the polarization that has occurred in British politics in the last few years has not been to the advantage of the left, as the left seemed earlier to think it might be. The general decline of belief in the capacity of a mixed economy to meet increasing aspirations has engendered so far not a tougher-minded general militancy of the left, but a politics of retrenchment and narrow self-interest—an ideology of collective downward mobility. This seems to have been true of most other capitalist states beset by recession. Crisis seems hitherto to have brought out reserves of chauvinist, authoritarian and selfish impulses in the British, not the more generous instincts of common citizenship that dominated during the very different crisis of the war. More generous feelings have been evoked in defence of public services and the welfare state, and the reactions to steel closures and unemployment in Wales are now telling a different story, but it is very ominous that trade unions are still being successfully labelled by Government and the media as the most prominent causes of economic failure. Stuart Hall and his colleagues have argued that there has been a pronounced and general drift towards a populism of the radical right.¹³ While it seems to me that the purchase of this ideological formation on popular feeling may still remain somewhat shallow—the Conservative election victory of 1979 was won by default of the Government as much as by conviction, and there is evidence of very ambivalent public feeling such that, given a choice of tax cuts or social services, the majority seemingly want both—there can be no doubt that the articulate opposition to the radical populism of the right has been feeble, unconvinced, and uncoordinated. The demonization of trade unions, extremists, and now spies as the source of Britain's problems continues unchallenged in an orchestrated campaign, and will have dire consequences, unless alternative definitions of the situation can be firmly established. Political failures by the new left, we have to learn, do have costs, though these have been concealed until now by the homogeneity, collusiveness, and unchallenged hegemony of the British governing elite and its seeming capacity to muffle changes of all kinds.

The system was for example able to contain its potentially most dangerous and charismatic opponent, Enoch Powell, through the constitutionalism and patrician ethos which continued to bind him to the norms of the governing class. Extremism of the right, like violence, is in Britain most dangerous when it is found within the governing minority, not when it threatens it from outside. Even the apparently

¹³ Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, London 1978. Stuart Hall 'The Great Moving Right Show', in *Marxism Today*, March 1979.

successful campaign by the left against the National Front is ironic in this respect, when one considers that many Front positions were quietly absorbed into Conservative politics while the left was battling it out on the streets. While mobilization against the Front was successful, the ambivalence towards the politics of 'physical force', evident both there and in some picketing campaigns, may also have had a backlash effect, in providing a further warrant for 'law and order'. It is difficult for the left to argue persuasively in defence of civil rights under the law (even where as with the events of Southall that is the critical argument against the police), when the left has not always seemed unwilling to reinterpret and limit these rights for others when its strength on the streets seemed to allow. It is unclear that such polarization, by implicit or explicit rejection of the whole framework of liberal argument, has so far been of any help to the left. This framework must surely be one of its principal resources in resisting pressures from the authoritarian right.

One benefit, however, of the theoretical evolution of Marxist social science of recent years has been that it may at least equip us better for understanding this political dilemma. Not even its most committed admirer could pretend that the early new left produced an elaborated and finished strategic analysis. Much of its work was engaged in the rediscovery of traditions and political roots, and in the case of *Universities and Left Review*, the identification of new and hopeful movements of feeling among a younger generation. The predominance of history of various kinds in the work of the most influential new left writers—this applies to Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart as well as Thompson and more lately Raphael Samuel—is both a strength and a weakness. Its strength is in the recognition and celebration of the existence and claims of the ordinary people. Its weakness, carried to the paradoxical point of a theoretical anti-theoreticism by Edward Thompson in recent years, is its refusal of a detached, critical, analysis of the possibilities of a given moment. The scientific tradition of Marxist thought, which Bill Schwarz has recently pointed out¹⁴ was an intellectual rival in the 1930s and 1940s to the 'culturalist' approaches of the Communist historians, does have the merit of addressing the problem of seeking to find laws, necessities, finite limitations within which men must work. It is no good saying there are no such limitations, that to the movement everything is possible. Edward Thompson's reliance on rhetorical effect where more rational arguments might fail—on a kind of literary magic—might be said to be a natural outcome of that misdefinition of what explanation has to try to do, if it is to give us more than moral and emotional guidance.

Particularly important in understanding the political alternatives set out here is Laclau's concept of populism. Laclau¹⁵ argues that class specific ideologies, far from being those most likely to unify a successful insurgent class alliance, are the most divisive. Ideological hegemony, almost by definition, is won through definitions and values which

¹⁴ In a recent talk at a seminar at North East London Polytechnic.

¹⁵ Ernesto Laclau: *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, especially chapter 3, NLB 1977.

transcend class boundaries. These are most commonly nationalist. They may also be racial, or religious, in these cases usually though not always supporting hegemonies of the right. In England, where populism has been intermittently of the left, it has literally been an ideology 'of the people', of citizenship and rights that men and women have in common. In the light of this argument the repudiation, on theoretical principle, of the 'populism' of the new left (I recall Perry Anderson's disapproval of a rhetoric of 'ordinary people' that I absorbed from these writers, after two decades) may be regarded as exceedingly misplaced. What is indeed now required is the careful reconstruction of a populism of the left, meaning not demagoguery, but the discovery of a political language which can relate people's actual desires and meanings, to an understanding of this society and its possibilities. Such a populism, to have any chance of success, must find roots in the values of groups who stretch well beyond what one might normally think of as the left.

It is the function of 'ideology', in the most general sense of that term, to link everyday reality with formalized accounts of the nature of things. This is the secular and social function of ideology in this society. In other societies, religious cosmologies may be more important in providing the overarching canopy of meanings within which people make sense of their existence. While there are different meanings and values competing in and between people's minds for their allegiance or belief, ideological commitments are normally resolved for individuals in their own personal terms, and for social groups in the terms of their culture. These are rarely the terms of theologians, political scientists, psychoanalysts or even Marxists, important in shaping and influencing background definitions as these 'experts' are. It is unreasonable to expect the division of labour to be overcome, *ever*, to the point where theoretical understanding and commonsense understanding become equivalent. This does not, of course, imply subscription to Althusser's Platonic idea that there is a higher realm of 'science' and a lower domain, to which most people are confined, of 'ideology'. The clarification and formalization of cosmological and inherently moral definitions of man's goals are no guarantee of their truth. Since moral commitments enter unavoidably into statements about the general nature of human societies, we can say that the assent or otherwise of the ordinary citizen, on these fundamental matters, is worth as much as that of any scientist *per se*, applying himself to social judgements. No-one can decide the meaning or purpose of a man's life for him. Althusser interestingly seeks to privilege the 'scientific' standpoint, and with it the presumed authority of a Marxist scientific leadership, by eliminating this moral element altogether. Ideology is defined by Althusser as the illusory construction of the moral individual subject, with purposive explanations of history or 'teleology' as its natural outcome. And of course it is a natural outcome, since where individuals identify with their moral communities, they will naturally construct collective memories and anticipations for these. But the boundaries are drawn in the wrong place, in Althusser's argument. Both science and ideology are inescapably moral in their definition and framing of human issues. They differ, as the pheno-

menologists understood,¹⁶ in their abstractness, their impersonality, their formalization, their explanatory power, not in their relevance to moral purposes. The inevitability of 'ideology', i.e. of everyday commonsense, is not the inevitability of error. It is merely that society is necessarily understood differently in the perspective of those who experience it, from that of those who formally study it. Even those who formally study society understand it in a different sense in their ordinary experience, which they share with others as citizens, parents etc., from their experience of it as scientists. Both 'ideological' and 'scientific' forms of understanding in this sense are inevitable, necessary, and worthy of human respect. We should privilege neither, but recognize that any adequate political formation will have to encompass, and take account of both. In the end this has implications for the proper role in social decisions of scientists, on the one hand, and popular democracy, on the other. We should not imagine that the former should *rule*, either as technocrats or Marxists. It might be better to say that scientists can propose, and popular democracy dispose. The relations between technical expertise of various kinds, and the means of popular control and decision-making, is a key problem for socialists for whom rational planning is by definition a key social function. The political mobilization of hostility to 'planning' is partly an outcome of failures of theory and practice here. It follows also from this that neither experience, nor theory, are in themselves self-sufficient foundations of our understanding. *Both* are necessary.

The problem in Britain at the present time is how to relate a still woefully undeveloped socialist theory of society to the actual beliefs, sentiments and definitions of the situation that people have, or might have. Or, to put it another way, how to overcome one set of theoretical linkages, to self-interest, chauvinism, repressiveness and the ideologies that rationalize these sentiments, with others which correspond to more generous and relational feelings. It would be a simplification to translate this, as some vanguardists would, to a problem of finding the correct slogans or 'line'. The construction of explanations and descriptions that conjoin theory and experience is more than connecting up a simple circuit between what we already know, and what masses already want. Socialists don't already know it, and the masses don't already want it, in that sense. Beliefs, values, explanations are continually re-created and re-made, as most of the major writers of the early new left (and many liberal writers besides) have established in the recent intellectual past.

The Problem of the Centre

The political failures of the past twenty years, with their now very ominous consequences, are one strong argument for sympathetically reconsidering the implicitly populist assumptions and styles of the early new left. Another reason for further exploring this strategy is the relative success, by comparison with recent history, of the left in the period leading up to 1945. 1945, as Addison's useful study *The Road to*

¹⁶ The argument here draws on the work of Alfred Schultz, *Collected Papers* Vol. 1, Part 1, Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

1945¹⁷ makes clear, was a victory by more (and for less) than socialism. It certainly could hardly be attributed to the work of the Labour Party, which had been in electoral suspension since the outbreak of war. What was mobilized in 1945 was a very widespread conviction across the left and centre of British politics that a new order was needed, and that many hated features of the 1930s, notably unemployment and poverty, had to be swept away. As well as the trade unions and committed socialists and communists, many intellectuals and professionals—economists, town planners, architects and designers, educationalists, even doctors and psychiatrists—became committed to reform and reconstruction. A greater role for the State was common consensus in this period, to an extent that we might have later regretted, but clearly consensus stopped well short of an articulate and committed socialist ideology.

It has been easy, with hindsight, to identify the elitist, administrative, and Fabian defects of this reforming period, and to recognize how the task accomplished by this dominant 'bloc' of trade unionists, municipal and State professionals was no more than to set capitalism back on its feet with a better managed and more human face. Raymond Williams has made a most interesting point, in *Politics and Letters*, in drawing attention to the effects of the starvation by the 1945 Labour Government of radical work in the arts, which might, if there had been a livelier and more critical culture, have maintained some greater momentum for the post-war Government. As it was, the development of radical culture had to wait until the 1960s, when the most favourable political opportunity had long passed. Nevertheless, limited as this achievement was, a major reconstruction from the centre and the left did take place, of a much more fundamental kind, measured against its own time, than anything that has been since even attempted by any Government until Mrs. Thatcher's. To achieve a further reconstruction of anything like that magnitude, with a comparable impact on economic management, employment, education and welfare—given that one starts from what was *then* achieved, especially in the extent of the aspirations that a 'desubordinated'¹⁸ people now have—would be, judged by recent standards, success indeed.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony, related to the concept of populism as its basis, is also fundamental to mapping out the current strategic task. As Prior and Purdy¹⁹ have recently pointed out with reference to Gramsci, we have to consider, in a society with as many autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions as this, that struggle must take place through many institutions. The transfer of emphasis from the State to civil society to which Gramsci directs attention is of the greatest importance. It is notable that in the attempt by the later new left to maintain a class-specific Marxism, considerable efforts have been devoted to refuting any reformist interpretations of Gramsci's work, and at maintaining him as a prop of pure revolutionism. The problem

¹⁷ Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, London 1975.

¹⁸ Ralph Milliband: 'A State of De-Subordination', in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 4, December 1978.

¹⁹ Dave Prior and Mike Purdy, *Out of the Ghetto*, Spokesman Books, 1979.

however, is to think out, and test out in practice, what an alternative possible basis for hegemony might be, and on what coalitions and alliances it might be based. The 'broad democratic alliance' is already proposed as a strategy by more open fragments within the Communist Party, and this points in the right direction. My own view however is that this is still envisaged (understandably from where CP members are) on too narrow a basis. Affinities of value and programme need to be extended across a very wide spectrum indeed of social interests and groupings, if any substantial recovery is to be made. Not only the left, but also the centre has to be politically reconstructed.

In one way only, the situation is hopeful, or at least one might say that there are some compensations even in losses. Some political, cultural, and professional interests that had thought themselves securely placed in the governing consensus are now abruptly discovering that they are outsiders, having little respect or power in the new order. For example, the Government has made it clear that it has little interest in consumerism and the consumers' movement, and that its respect for market forces doesn't extend to the circulation of information about products and services which alone can make competition work. The closing down—or ending of support—for institutions such as the Centre for Educational Disadvantage, the Personal Social Services Council and the Centre for Environmental Studies, are attacks on organizations attempting mainly to monitor public services on behalf of their collective consumers. It is some time since the consumers' movement was forced to consider its relation to wider political forces and trends, and whether it needed any intellectual or political allies. Many occupational groups in the public and social services may be making this same discovery. Services that were earlier brought into the mainstream political consensus as an outcome of political struggles—health and education services based on the principle of free and universal access, for example—are being now put into question by the intellectual resurgence and political dominance of market theory. While these functions remain broadly consensual their providers have no particular reason to see them as political matters. Town planning is another occupation of this kind, which after radical and utopian beginnings had become politically neutralized and technicized by its incorporation into the local government structure. One of the characteristic processes of the British political system since the war has been the use of voluntary and radical activity as a kind of social research and development agency of the State. The identification of needs and experimental initiatives in meeting them—family planning, community law centres, pre-school education, community arts programmes, 'free schools' for deprived adolescents—have led to foundation and government subsidy, and subsequent partial incorporation and routinization of such services within the State system. One might say that radicalism has been incorporated and fragmentized in this way. Now this process looks like being put into reverse, as State social provision is cut back instead of extended, and at a time of increasing social problems. This may make possible a more reflective and systematic debate about the inequities and casualties of the system, though there is no reason for confidence that socialists will naturally prevail in such arguments.

The attack on the State sector has this effect in general, threatening and dislodging from a complacent sense of belonging to the mainstream both consumers and professional suppliers of public services. Many groups of both producers and consumers may become available to new political thinking and organization in the next two or three years, if they can find any political response to relate to. The current debate about class fractions and the allegiance of intermediary strata is central to this whole question, though the debate, in keeping with its sociological and theoreticist origins has a somewhat scholastic quality, and perhaps arises mainly as an attempt to rationalize what in other societies, where 'Euro-Communism' and Communist Party revisionism have gone further, has already been incorporated into political strategy. One envisages also a more pragmatic and concrete exploration of possible affinities and programmes, though the theoretical analysis remains important.

In the field of Britain's international relations, similar reactions have recently been provoked by the Government's explicit repudiations of such few internationalist pieties as were left. There was a recent striking speech by Sir Edward Boyle,²⁰ indentifying the consistent pattern shown in the present Government's attitudes to overseas students, to immigration, to BBC external broadcasting, and to cultural relations with foreign countries. Liberal internationalism has been one of the most important currents of thought contributing to the left, with ethical and non-conformist origins, and the resurgence of Cold War attitudes by Government, especially when this posture is in such manifest contradiction with Britain's small-power and marginal situation, may also remobilize thinking about alternatives. Present rhetoric after all dramatizes in an extreme way a prolonged failure to identify any tenable role for Britain as a declining power. Edward Thompson's recent impressive reassertion of the earlier new left alternative of socialist-neutralism evokes the more socialist potential of a pacific and internationalist outlook, and a tradition of generous feeling with which this can connect.

Programmatic Alternatives

The weakness of the *May Day Manifesto's* conception of 'linkage' between issue groups and interests needs to be understood, lest its failures be repeated. Little was offered, by the *Manifesto*, in the way of 'value-added' to the separate campaigns it identified, other than its own analysis, as a given. It had neither organizational ideas, nor a programme of intellectual work which might actually link the goals of various disparate groups to an ongoing process of thought or action. Talking about linkage is not enough: links must be made, in ideas or practice or both. *Beyond the Fragments* and the 'broad democratic alliance' groupings have a more tangible and concrete idea of what they mean, and focus on local unity and on tactical struggles—over unemployment, or public services—as the means for this. While this seems to me correct, it is too localized, and too particularistic, to meet the purpose of constructing an alternative consensus. There need to be intellectual

²⁰ Reported in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, November 23rd 1979.

and ideological initiatives as well as, and linked to, local issues. It must be recognized against all fundamentalist claims, that the problem is not merely to achieve the 'demands' we already have, but to clarify what such demands would actually mean, and entail. For example, the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine, and its Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems (CAITS), argue rightly for the substitution of 'socially useful' products for commercial or military products which for Lucas now seem unsaleable. But who should determine what is a socially useful product, and by what criteria? What implications does this demand have for the roles of the market and of planning in the economy? How should such economic decisions be made? The demand (attacked, incidentally, by vanguardist groups like the SWP for diverting the workers from their everyday bargaining claims) raises problems for the whole management of the economy, which cannot be solved in isolation. A movement needs the capacity to *think*, at length, about such questions, and it cannot succeed if all issues are immediately subsumed into 'demands' (the activist version) or legislative proposals (the electoral party's). Feminists have argued, rightly, that the activity of building the future has to take place, and be felt to be creative and fruitful, in the present. It is only out of this patience that an alternative hegemony could be made.

Left wing politics in Britain is also perpetually damaged by the pressures that the electoral process places on it. If groups are not involved in the electoral system, they seem to be marginal, and cannot sustain any long-term direction or momentum. If they get involved in it, as the CP has done over many years and as the Labour left of course must, then it exhausts their energies, and merely repeatedly 'proves' their relative weakness and lack of public legitimacy. So organizations are humiliated and made ridiculous at the polls, or at least have to spend all their energies in staying alive and redressing the effects of election failures. Or there is the sectarian recourse, of giving priority to recruitment and socialization, in effect using conflicts and struggles as a means of maintaining internal mobilization. The intense commitment thus created in members, and the strength of the boundary created between them and the mundane world, keeps sects in being, though at a cost in fission, in drop-out, and in the acute sense of difference from the majorities who are meant to be led. One feature of the politics of the left in recent years, compared with the early sixties, is the acceptance of sectarian organization as the normal means of political survival, where the earlier new left generally criticized its then forms as a limitation and weakness. Or again, there is the 'campaigning movement' model of maintaining momentum, in which assemblies and confrontations of one kind or another give enough ritual reinforcement of the collective being of the movement to maintain members' sense of commitment outside of the electoral process. Movements cannot do without such manifestations—celebrations of their collective existence and values—but that is hardly a sufficient programme for long-term change.

The problem, then, for any organized 'movement' is what is it in fact to do? How can purposes outside the local and immediate experience of members, to which much left activity has retreated, be made credible and achievable, when electoralism is neither available as an option, nor

in any case sufficient. This dilemma leads some on the left reasonably to hope for the introduction of proportional representation, both on the grounds that almost any disturbance of the political duopoly would be desirable, and also because then at least the left could become an identifiable contesting presence. But while such a change, which is indeed one possible outcome of a centrist reaction to Thatcherism, would open new possibilities, it would hardly by itself avoid the need to consider the much wider problems of mobilization and ideology.

The problem is that it is so much easier to identify the limitations of each of the available models of political action that have been attempted over recent years, than to clearly specify any plausible alternatives. One can point to the costs of the particular priorities chosen by the later new left, and the urgency of a more engaged and open politics, without it being easy to advance that argument beyond where it was in 1967. What we should now perhaps be seeking to construct is some synthesis of the accomplished intellectual understandings of the new left—one might almost say academic left—with the populist and political approaches of the previous period. *Towards Socialism* in 1965 defined part of the British problem as the absence of a coherent sociology, of a developed capacity of the society to reflect upon itself, which was also a problem for the working class movement in the lack of an available Marxism. The new left foundered as a political movement in part through its analytic confusions, and through the weakness of a political culture which made any complex and rational process of establishing strategies and objectives difficult, in any organized way. The beginnings of an analytic language had to be improvised in the heat of the political moment, or were developed as an implication of theoretical work on mainly cultural themes.

It may be hoped that the theoretical development and extended educational process of the past few years has repaired some of these defects, and made possible a more reflective and systematic political approach. It might therefore be possible, in any new interventions, for relatively elaborated analyses and goals to be held publicly in mind. Success in resisting a system of ideological domination, in mounting challenges to it, in giving weight to new issues and proposals, cannot be measured in merely electoral or recruiting terms. The first prerequisite of any unifying political initiative is that it faces up to these problems of assessing its own progress. A quality that must be asked of any political structure is that it should be rational, and in a relatively complex way.

A second imperative is the need for an active, connected engagement with programmatic issues. It is necessary, if anyone is to take socialist alternatives seriously, to attempt to think out and propose what they might be. And since it is held that issues and changes are connected, and also that elites do not hold valid blueprints to lay down, it is necessary that this should be an open and continuing process. The implications of a particular social experience of loss, or need, are not self-evident, and require to be thought through. The underlying values of the social order are expressed and challenged through particular events and conflicts, and one should see issues of policy—the ending of

unnecessary illness and death through relative poverty, or accident and neglect, or induced anxiety and addiction, for example—as potential embodiments and indicators of deep moral and ideological differences. Conservative populism has established itself through the interpretation of such (different) central issues, and has sought to establish its powerful ideological and theoretical definitions of meaning and value in this way. Socialists must do no less, and will only be able to think through what their own different sense of social relationship is in this process. The moral superiority of socialism over capitalism, which many non-socialists have at least theoretically conceded in a previous generation, is no longer so widely recognized.

It is the connected implications of issues that needs to be thought out, in an application of theoretical energies to practical concerns. What might follow, for example, from the concept of an alternative corporate plan developed by workers? Or from the introduction of micro-chips? Or from nuclear energy and its alternatives, compared with one another? Or from the idea of more accountable public services? It is not a matter of writing a single manifesto but of the need for a continuing programme of thought and research about the interrelations of issues and proposals. Politics must be thought of as a process, not the imposition of the truth, and its organizations need to see themselves as connected intelligent networks, not as hierarchies of command. The role of intellectuals in politics is to think—intellectuals and their role have perhaps become more respectable in certain circles lately through Gramsci's writings. While some might say that there is little evidence of ideas having much influence in British politics, Keynes correctly pointed out that even the most anti-intellectual pragmatists in fact depended on the half-understood ideas of the past, and this is also the important point of the critique of British empiricism. Nor should we ignore the potent influence of rigorous conservative ideas, thought by large numbers of economists and others over twenty or more years, in the present counter-revolution. It is the relation of thinking to experience and action that is the problem, and this link between intellectual work and specific political issues is what has been most neglected in recent years, partly as a result of the self-sufficiency of radical scholarship. The collapse of the centre in face of monetarism and law and order has to be accounted partly the result of a starvation of ideas and controversy—the intellectual capital which might even have resisted erosions into the mixed economy has been steadily depleted. While there are many exceptions of course, the narrowness of the base of applied socialist thinking is very notable: two or three economists appear to write Labour left programmes, while hundreds gather in the Conference of Socialist Economists and have no visible influence on political discussion.

The Fabians are much despised these days, for their dryness, elitism, parliamentarism, and for their role in developing the bourgeois interventionist state. It must however be said of this tendency that they were somewhat successful. They set out to permeate government, and did. One would define the present problem as not to permeate government, but to support the articulation of an opposition, of analysis and proposals for a future some of which might be the outcome of

legislation, and some of which might be lived and achieved in other ways. If intellectuals devoted to that task could be as successful, in a disseminated, democratic mode as the Fabians were within the Labour Party, they would have done much. At this point, anything which can bring even an identifiable advance in the influence of a progressive intellectual stratum on British politics should not be regarded as negligible. We are now in a situation where slow improvement cannot be taken for granted, and where one cannot afford to entertain options of utopia or nothing. Some groups on the left have now to think out what this society is going to become, in active relation to political issues. It will otherwise be the political right which continues to determine what happens henceforth. This intellectual field ought to be one of the few where the left enjoys, as it used to, a natural advantage. Given the massive problems and loss of confidence which it now faces, even British society may now be obliged to notice any determined efforts to think out an alternative social agenda for the 1980's. And unlike in the early days of the Fabians, there are now far more intellectually trained people about. They do not all see themselves as an elite minority.

Intellectuals in this role would represent, among other things, professional and semi-professional strata who have been in various kinds of alliance or interdependency with the working class movement for a generation or more. Since the pressures for the growth of the interventionist State have come, in England, from the working class movement, and professionals in health, planning, social services and education have been the agents, servants and beneficiaries of this development, there has been a particular symbiosis between these strata. This was after all the earlier social basis of Fabianism, and both in America and in Britain 'poverty programmes', community organization, and other government-funded social initiatives in the sixties gave this alliance a more dispersed and grass-roots character. A common mobilization of the professionals staffing various public agencies, other groups of organized workers within them, and the collective consumers of these publicly provided services, is the least one must hope for in defending such social democracy as we have. This does not imply any commitment to the present structure or accountability of these agencies, or to professionals' status and power within them, which is a matter for specific debate and bargaining, and indeed requires fundamental thought.

A greater practical commitment to specific analysis, programme, and policy by intellectuals would make a contribution in the present situation, and might begin to lay down some of the intellectual capital which any reversal of present tendencies will depend on. However it is not sufficient. The problem remains of what wider and more democratic forms of organization or movement are possible. It is partially at least the same problem, since the agenda for relevant political action cannot easily be set in the absence of a movement—that is exactly the present vacuum.

The Importance of Workplace Organization

In the last resort the key issue is one of mobilization and support. The

deepest weakness of Fabianism is that it takes for granted the institutional structures on which its proposals depend, and since these are structures of domination more than they are means of democratic control, they have not in the end been able to sustain any continuing social transformation. To debate policy and issues in the absence of an analysis of social power would be mainly a futile activity, a kind of trap. To discuss 'constructive alternatives' in these terms, while neglecting the social and institutional supports on which these must depend, is to ask for a repeat of previous disillusionments. So a necessary prerequisite of political intervention is a continuing analysis of alternative forms of power, as institutions, rights, information, and means of participation. A sociological—or Marxist—analysis (they can sometimes be different forms of the same analytical debate) of the forms of power, related to a strategy of change, might bring some benefit, now that the intellectual tools for this undoubtedly exist.

Movements and organizations with the capacity to achieve changes usually make some significant innovation in method or structure. The laws of natural selection do operate, with modifications, in the sphere of organizational competition as well as in markets and in nature. There is one specific innovation which it seems to me should be seriously considered in the current debate on strategy on the left. That is the possibility of basing political organizations, of a broad and unsectarian kind, on the workplace, rather than on the residential community. This may have become a more feasible proposal for intellectually-based political initiatives than it has ever been previously, because of the greater numbers now engaged in professional work, and their radicalization. It is no longer so obvious that the only work setting worth thinking about is the factory. But the failure to explore this option before, for example during the earlier new left's activist initiatives, may have been the effect of a structural limit to politics in Parliamentary democracy as it now is, which the left has never fully comprehended. This structural limit is the binary division established in capitalism between the sphere of work and the sphere of home, a division the recognition and comprehension of whose effects has been very important to the feminist movement. One can express this binary division in the following ways:

| Economism | Locality-parliamentarism |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| the industrial | the political |
| trade unions | political parties |
| production | reproduction, collective |
| | consumption |
| wage issues | social service issues |
| affiliations based on work | affiliation based on residence and |

The consequence of this structured division of role, activity, and organization, is to cut off work from the sphere of political decision and discussion, and to cut off home from the common interests and affiliations established at work. These domains are of course linked at a 'higher level', through representatives and leadership machinery of various kinds. Trade unions are represented on the general management committees of labour parties; they dominate Party Conferences

and could dominate the NEC. But the power-sharing arrangements of leaderships do not overcome the functional differences of the organizations which they represent, nor are they intended to. Work, in this structure, is not meant to be the site of politics, and politics is not really meant to engage with the problems of work.

This is the organizational foundation of economism. The agenda of trade unions is limited to the essentially a-political wage-bargaining process, which assumes that overall decisions in a firm are an economic matter, nothing to do with politics. If things go wrong (plant closure for example) then politics may be needed, but this is an exception, and one then looks for a sympathetic politician.

But the broader the left's definition of politics, and the more it pursues a general aim of democratization, the accountability of decisions and leaders, and self-activity, the more restrictive this structured opposition of the economic and political spheres becomes. One sees the effect of this split in an institution such as a polytechnic. There, separate unions represent students, academics, white collar and manual staff. Their members never meet, though liaison committees do. When the union branches meet, they discuss not the overall direction or policy of the institution, but their local concerns over wages and conditions of service. Even if the twenty branch members attending a meeting are only there, and are known to each other only to be there, from political commitment, the convention of 'union' as opposed to 'political' activity can be strong enough to inhibit any explicit political reference or discussion. So the various categories of worker in the institution both separately and jointly fail to discuss what the institution is about. Issues which might cut across their separate occupational interests—or wider goals and priorities—may never be discussed at all.

Now in an academic institution this confinement of trade union functions to a rather narrow domain may not greatly matter, since other representative institutions exist—academic boards and the like—on which all groups have some representation. A particular institution's avowed commitment to democratic social change can thus be fulfilled, in theory, through these legislative means. But many institutions, especially industrial and bureaucratic ones, do not have such representative formal structures, of any kind. In those institutions, if the unions don't concern themselves with wider questions of strategy and institutional objectives, employees are entirely disfranchised.

One might already explain the greater resilience of Labour programmes in the areas of health and social services, compared with the extreme weakness of their industrial policies, by the degree to which occupational groups in these areas are already committed to ends broader than the wage-bargain. In the 'social sector' there has long been a network of pressure groups and academic researchers, and occupational strata have a 'professional' conception of their right to an interest in policy-matters. Teachers, for example, have been an important influence in the movement for, and implementation of, comprehensive school reorganization, and in the health service there have been similar occupational commitments to the purposes of the service. Clearly the role

of highly-educated basic-grade staff and the absence of clear distinctions of 'head and hand' in these service functions is important. But in most industries the position is different, and there is little notion that the ends served by an industry, or its industrial strategy, are the concern either of workers or their union representatives, so long as employment and wages are secure. There are exceptions, so far as trade union activity is concerned, and the alternative corporate plan movement is an important attempt to break through into a different role. It seems likely that the ignominious collapse of Labour Governments' attempts at industrial planning, and their apparent reliance mainly on small handfuls of more-or-less sympathetic businessmen for such plans as they do attempt, are an outcome of this lack of an informed political or industrial base for these policies.

There are two ways of conceiving this absence of work-based political structures. The more fundamental and long-term concerns the formal representation of economic interests within the political system. In a system as highly interdependent and socialized as modern capitalism it could be argued that there needs to be a formal representation of occupational and economic interests if democratic procedures are to be more than a veneer. 'Informal corporatism'—through institutions such as the National Economic Development Council—has grown up as an improvised means of conflict-management between the State, labour and capital, in the absence of formal mechanisms. Better have an explicit and formal system of representation—an alternative second chamber—which would be likely to encourage the articulation and mobilization of interests, and on a more just and elective basis. Such structures would also be relevant at local and regional levels of Government, where occupational and economic interests are also heavily engaged, but in the local case even further from any representative access. The subordination of the trades councils by segmented trade union hierarchies earlier in this century has played a key role in this depoliticization of the local economy.

The Scope for Political Association

A second dimension of this issue is the more immediate possibility of initiating work-based political associations, as a centre at least for discussion. This would be a means of seeking to extend the debate on issues as they affect workers of various kinds, especially at a time when so many areas of work are being brought into question by industrial decline, public spending cuts, and technological changes. It might also be a means of relating the expertise of workers in one setting to the needs of others. Workers attempting to devise corporate plans or alternative products frequently lack the relevant kinds of expertise, and few channels exist whereby they can now find it. The lack of political association is even culturally important, since it makes it difficult to formulate conceptions of social purpose even where it would seem quite legitimate, in present terms, to do so. In a pluralist society, it is quite reasonable to expect higher education institutions to serve the needs of the institutions of labour as well as those of capital and Government, by providing research for trade unions for example. In universities there has more often been a negative concern about

undesirable social purposes served by institutions—for example during the Vietnam War—than explicit positive proposals for doing different work.

This is not an argument, one might add, for the over-politicization of every issue. The general argument made here for an open and populist form of politics implies a particular attentive and patient method in such activity, especially if its primary goal is to increase active participation and develop medium term objectives and programmes. Furthermore unions already exist to take up immediate struggles, and the respect given to politics will not be enhanced by stridency. But more important than the style is the principle. I think there is little doubt that the attempt to establish broad-spectrum, work-based *political* organization would break important taboos in this political and economic system and the cry of 'commissar' would not be long in coming. However the likelihood of conflict is only an indicator that a proposal has the potential for change. One does not have to have much liking for or relish for conflict in practice to acknowledge that without it there is no politics, and no movement.

Another source of opposition to an initiative such as this might be the trade unions themselves. The work/territory split between union and party presently suits both, and the creation of an alternative centre of initiative in a workplace could hardly be welcome to those owing their main role and commitment to the union. There is a further element of threat. Political discussion of the work-situation will inevitably go beyond question of bargaining and wages, towards matters of policy, investment, growth, etc. Whereas unions can operate with a convention that it is management's job to manage, and ours to bargain with them, a *political* discussion would not. In this sense this proposal has implications for another debate. The logic of political discussion is, in the end, the definition of decisions as political, and as needing to be influenced in these terms. It is becoming a fundamental decision for socialists whether the depoliticization of the market economy, and the institution of free wage bargaining, should be defended, or whether changes should be sought which would bring both greater influence over the decisions of firms, and also a corresponding inhibition of the power to oppose them, once made. Work-based politics does support the implication, in the end, that one cannot hope to plan everything except the labour market. There is a fundamental connection between this proposal, and the idea of industrial democracy.

The contribution of workplace-based political organization would not necessarily be mainly in pursuing the aims of industrial democracy. The defect of locally-based political organization, especially that of the Labour Party with its usually strictly territorial basis,²¹ is that it fragments the expertise of its members, and prevents it being brought to bear on political issues. The advantage of work-based organization is that it would concentrate expertise, and make it available for much

²¹ Since a ward will cover only a small neighbourhood, and only ten to twenty people will attend its meetings, it follows that there will rarely be many resources of shared knowledge available for policy discussion.

wider-ranging political discussion. For example, a political group based in a large hospital might represent workers from many different occupations and disciplines. They would have the intellectual resources, and the experience, to consider the implications of, for example, a shift from curative to preventive priorities in medical care, or the problems of differential availability to medical services in a given area. And in the area of industry itself, shop stewards' combines such as Lucas have already shown the necessity of industry-wide associations in facing the effects of corporate policies. While this has occurred on a joint trades union basis, it is possible that political association might make available wider resources of skill, occupational background, and knowledge.

The erosion of the base of the major political parties, especially on the left, the domination of political discussion by highly centralized media, and the tendency, until the recent Government's election, for the incorporation of trade unions and business into a tripartite system of informal economic management with government, have led many to fear the development of a 'corporate state'. The potential for surveillance and improved policing provided by technologies such as computers has added the anxiety that liberties would become increasingly restricted and dissent rendered more and more costly. A further threatening development in this direction was the idea that the decline of active support for political parties should be made up by the provision of State political subsidies, allotted on the basis of existing voting shares. This would then shore up political structures that have been losing their capacity to mobilize genuine support, fossilizing a pattern of representation and control that is unable to survive in open competition. This trend to the corporate state seems to have been temporarily reversed, though there can be no certainty that it will not be revived as a 'consensual' alternative in the event of the failure of the current more radical conservative approach.

Reversing the Decline of Politics

There cannot be much doubt, even so, that rejuvenation is much needed even on a liberal analysis of the problems of the political system. Information about government is restricted. Political participation is low. The Government is even going to legislate to increase participation in trade union elections, though stimulating politics is scarcely what it has in mind. Accountability of local and national government agencies for what they do is small. The capacity of the system to engender effective debate of real political alternatives is little. This is mainly because the numbers involved in face-to-face political activity are so small, and because television and newspapers can so rarely provide a substitute for actual debate which gives a sense of event, or drama, or genuine argument. Consider for example the absence of public debate on the current proposals to station new nuclear missiles in Britain. Or the way in which what are essentially quite moderate and Keynesian proposals for import controls from Wynne Godley and others in the Cambridge Economic Policy Group, have been dealt with in effect by a conspiracy of silence or trivialization, while this is rejected as a possibility by the Parliamentary front benches.

Journalists speculate that either Party leadership might be forced to turn to this option, presumably having become converted while still refusing public debate. Meanwhile a whole range of alternative policies are given the collective label 'the left wing siege economy solution', thus rendering exposition or consideration of it unnecessary. Fear of a left wing alternative, of course, underlies much of recent Government and Labour leadership strategy, not least for example in their persistence with membership of the Common Market, despite its evidently catastrophic economic effects.

The general problem is a death of politics, and an over-centralized and oligarchic political system. What Bernard Crick²² described as 'politics'—explicit and open conflict about ends and means, conducted through a framework of political rules—which is no more than Parliamentary democracy claims to be, is in fact gravely attenuated. A similar erosion and decay has been recently described by Edward Thompson and others as undermining the judicial process.²³ One need be suggesting no more than an attempt to extend and make genuine a liberal framework of political conflict, in proposing a greater priority for the political.

Political institutions are not immune from the need for renewal and change, though those who benefit most from their present form will naturally resist any loss in their own security and power. Durkheim argued that the strongest forms of 'moral relation' in an industrial society would be not based on kinship, or on territory, but on occupation.²⁴ Given the development of other modes of differentiation of interest and social experience since Durkheim wrote—by gender, by collective consumption, by generation, by culture—and a likely decline in future in the salience of work and its meanings—even this now seems a somewhat anachronistic view. Yet the political system has not adjusted, directly, even to the importance of occupation in the representation of social interests. 'Corporatism' can be seen as a belated and extra-constitutional way of adjusting to what have become the realities of power in an industrial society, where these could not be mediated successfully through Parliamentary methods.²⁵ No doubt the reason why liberal capitalism has not made such a constitutional adjustment is because Marx and Lenin, as well as Durkheim, urged the importance of the workplace as a potentially political unit, and the separation of 'work' from 'politics' has in the end protected a capitalist economy from political encroachment. Or, in ensuring that any political encroachment into the economy which is made arises from the level of the State, ensured that it manifested itself as another mode of alien domination, rather than as an achievement of popular control.

To try and shift the focus of political debate and action to the workplace is a small step indeed in the face of these established structures.

²² Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, 1964.

²³ Edward Thompson: 'The State of the Nation', series of six articles in *New Society* from November 8th to December 13th, 1979.

²⁴ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, Glencoe 1964.

²⁵ A useful discussion of the pre-war debate on planning and its institutions, and its relation to many recent proposals and experiments in economic planning is contained in Trevor Smith, *The Politics of the Corporate Economy*, London, 1979.

One looks for organizational innovations, since these, like new ways of defining a problem, can sometimes in themselves release energies and imagination. Established structures, even of the left, have usually become routine, have reached the limits of their possible growth, and include for their members an experience of disenchantment and limitation. So political growth, like other forms of culture, depends on finding new methods and forms.

More fundamental to this argument than the location of political activity, however, is the definition of what is now required as politics. The experience which *Beyond the Fragments* points to is local—socialists and radicals have succeeded at times in many cities and neighbourhoods in maintaining some centre for discussion and action. There is no reason to suppose that such initiatives will not remain fundamental. But what these have lacked, as *Beyond the Fragments* also forcefully states, is any real connection with a wider politics. It is the relations between issues and programmes which seem to be decisive in making any real change in the way this society now works. Such changes have to be prepared long before any Governments are elected. It is perhaps realistic to expect Governments invariably to deteriorate after their first day or months, and the critical efforts are therefore those expended before their moment even arrives. Such efforts must be concerned as much with the creation of consensus as with the writing of party manifestos: the contractual basis of the Labour Party has proved a weak reed in recent times. They must also be of the most varied and pervasive kinds, as they were in the early sixties. It is no good disdaining relations with Members of Parliament, who are the professional brokers in this political system (someone has that function in any politics), or with any other centre of influence. The left has not succeeded by self-righteously cultivating its own cultural territory, and shows declining prospects of doing so. That has been a means of collectively surviving within capitalism, like non-conformity after the Restoration, but not of changing it. There is no doubt another view of the present crisis: that massive resistance to Thatcherism will eventually overthrow the system, without need for sullyng compromises with centrism or for a new popular consensus. This view will no doubt be argued at length. It seems to me that there is little in recent history to justify any confidence in it.

The final conclusion, of course, must be that writing articles about these problems is not enough. The efforts which have been previously made, so feebly and abortively it now seems, to get people together, to make an organization, to do collective political work, are more necessary than ever. More necessary in fact than they have seemed for many years, as the outcomes of our earlier defeats become more apparent and threatening. The erosion of collective life and moral solidarity in this atomizing society appears to have affected the left as much as more traditional associations such as churches and families. Even maintaining the community of a political organization over a period of years, with the obligations that would entail, would be an act of living a more social future, in preparing it. This society does change slowly but who cannot see, in its present direction, the potential of a very bitter future?

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interview

Roy Medvedev

The Afghan Crisis

How is the Soviet government explaining its actions in Afghanistan to the Soviet people and to what extent is it possible to agree with this explanation?

The Soviet government's explanation for the action in Afghanistan is contained in TASS press releases and in the interview that L. I. Brezhnev gave to a *Pravda* correspondent. The explanation was published at the end of December 1979 and the beginning of January 1980 and it consists of three points: (1) The Soviet government sent its forces into Afghanistan at the request of the Afghan government and in accordance with the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that had earlier been signed. (2) The Afghan government made this request because the new regime, established as a result of the democratic revolution of April 1978, was in a critical state with the rise of counter-revolution. The Afghan army was not able to defeat the insurgents with its own forces. (3) The success of the counter-revolution in Afghanistan is due to the support it is receiving from the USA, China and Pakistan.

There is some degree of truth in all three points. It is clear, for example, that the new regime in Afghanistan was in a critical position in December 1979. The government of Kh. Amin had lost control of most provinces of the country and it would not have been able to survive without direct help from the USSR. I am sure that the Afghan government, first under Taraki and then Amin, repeatedly asked the Soviet government for military support. Proof of this is shown by the fact that long before December 1979, the USSR sent a large number of military and civilian advisors, specialists and weaponry to Afghanistan. Still earlier helicopter guard units were sent to defend aerodromes and military bases in Afghanistan. This support turned out to be insufficient to halt the growth of insurgency, however. There is evidence that the Afghan insurgents have received help from Pakistan and China. (It was the Western press, not the Soviet, that reported the existence of partisan bases, supply depots, field hospitals and command centres for the disparate groups of insurgents in Pakistan in the spring and summer of 1979.)

The official version of the events in Afghanistan is incomplete however and therefore it is inaccurate. But the official American version is also difficult to believe. In times of military and political crisis all sides are guilty of circulating 'misinformation' as well as the facts. It is very difficult to get to the truth, especially when the events take place in such a distant and unfamiliar country as Afghanistan. Therefore I am unable to comment critically on the Soviet and Western versions of the present crisis.

My personal opinion is that the murder and death of Amin and part of his circle of followers and relatives on the night of 28 December 1979 was not planned but happened as a result of unexpected developments during the seizure of Kabul on 27-28 December. It is clear that the replacement of Amin by Babrak Karmal (plus the fate of a number of other officials) had already been decided before the intervention. Other decisions were taken actually in Kabul by the Soviet advisors there under the direction of the deputy minister of Internal Affairs, USSR, General Paputin. The replacement of Amin by Karmal was meant to take place 2-3 days after the successful securing of the capital by the Soviet army but it seems that something 'went wrong' with this scenario. The Soviet government is now having difficulty explaining how its army was invited into Afghanistan by the president of that country who died a few hours after the arrival of the Soviet forces. Even more difficult to explain is how it is that the Soviet army was invited to Kabul by a person who the present Afghan government is describing as a longstanding agent of the CIA. Babrak Karmal's statement that he was hiding secretly in Kabul and had organized an underground government is completely incorrect. The behaviour of Amin on the fatal day of 27 December; his meeting with the Soviet ambassador and journey to his country palace, indicates that he did not intend to oppose the arrival of the Soviet forces. Also the unexpected recall of General Paputin, his suicide in an airplane at a Soviet airport and the tardiness in reporting this death, to my mind are further evidence that miscalculations took place.

It is possible however that all the events of 27-29 December took place in accordance with a plan and that the invitation to the Soviet armed forces came from a semi-official group of activists in the PDPA, including Babrak Karmal. If this is the case, the episode of Paputin's death must presumably be due to something else. Of course we will not know the answers to these questions for a long time.

As far as I know, the USSR cannot be held responsible for 'organizing' the April revolution in Afghanistan in 1978. This was an internal affair of the country itself. Afghanistan belongs to the ranks of the poorest and most backward countries in Asia. The Afghan intelligentsia had more than enough reasons for dissatisfaction with the existing regime and this dissatisfaction was shared by members of the armed forces. It was the support of the army that ensured the victory of the PDPA. However, there was not a mass revolutionary movement in Afghanistan. The greater part of the poor peasant population, the nomads and the mountain tribes lent their support to the feudal and tribal chiefs and the spiritual leaders who opposed the government. Taraki's government met this opposition with repression. Factional struggles developed in the PDPA, of which Taraki and his supporters were victims along with many of the supporters of Babrak Karmal. The repression increased and even the Soviet papers told of the tens of thousands of innocent people suffering at the hands of the ruling group in Kabul. It is not surprising that with such a brutal regime in Kabul mass opposition developed. It was the Kabul government, not China or the USA, that must be held responsible for the size of the counter-revolution in Afghanistan.

The Soviet government faced two alternatives in the complicated situation in Afghanistan and it wavered a long time before taking a decision. The first alternative was to withdraw all military and civilian personnel (the path that America took in Iran) but this would have resulted in the fall of Amin and a dangerous situation for the USSR. The second alternative was to intervene further but this path also was fraught with difficulties. The Soviet government did not think that the consequences of its actions would be too great however. In taking the decision to go into Afghanistan there were three important factors that the Soviet government took into account: 1) the failure of its talks with China aimed at normalizing relations between the two countries, 2) the growing rapprochement between China and the USA involving the promise of military-political aid, 3) the deterioration of relations with the USA. An example of this last point was the artificial 'Cuban crisis' of 1979 and the extreme probability that the SALT-2 talks would not be ratified by the US Senate. There is a Russian saying 'Better a tomtit in the hand than a crane in the sky'. But the tomtit was already in the hand and the government did not want to let it go, while the crane had flown a long way away and the chance of it returning was receding with every day.

The reality of today's world is that each country considers the protection of its own interests more important than keeping to the norms of international law. This is illustrated by the action of China in Vietnam, the USA in Indochina, the Tanzanians in Uganda, Israel in Lebanon, England in Northern Ireland, France in Central Africa and the USSR in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and now Afghanistan. It would take several pages to list all the violations of international law that have taken place in the last 20 years. This is a very dangerous tendency and it is precisely to counter it that it is important to work hard for the relaxation of international tensions and for peace.

To what extent do you think that the action in Afghanistan is consistent with Soviet policy over the last 16 years?

I think that the action in Afghanistan is consistent with Soviet foreign policy not only of the past 16 years but over the past 30 years. We would have been able to predict the intervention had we known all the details of what was taking place there. It is not correct to look upon the events simply as the action of a super-power interested above all else in further strengthening its influence in the world, however. The Soviet government continues to be ideologically motivated and must give its support to all revolutionary and national movements in the world. It is possible that from the national point of view the Soviet Union had more to gain from the continuation of the monarchy in Afghanistan, which was loyal and friendly to the USSR, than the new regime. Revolutions do not always end as their leaders would like. That is one of history's 'paradoxes'.

How important do you think were the actions of Western governments in the period before December 1979 in influencing the Soviet government's decision-making?

I have had conversations with several experts and observers who have told me that if the American Senate had been going to ratify SALT-2, if Western Europe had refused to take NATO cruise missiles as the USSR requested and if the Soviet-Chinese talks had gone successfully, then the Soviet government would have found it very difficult to take the decision to go into Afghanistan. Had circumstances been different it is possible that the Soviet Union would have felt the need to recall its specialists from Afghanistan and tell the Afghans to continue their struggle alone.

When Soviet troops went into Czechoslovakia in 1968 there was a considerable volume of protest among the Soviet intelligentsia. Compared with them, today's protest about the intervention in Afghanistan seems muted. Can you explain this?

It seems to me that there are three reasons for this. First, the Soviet intelligentsia was much better informed of events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 than they are about events today in Afghanistan. Throughout 1968 much appeared in print about Czechoslovakia. There were discussions in the papers and articles were published written by individual Czech leaders and writers defending their point of view. Soviet people were able to read Czech newspapers in 1968: one of my friends took out a subscription to *Rude Pravo* and quickly learnt the Czech language. Much material from Czech newspapers was translated and began to circulate in *samizdat*. The democratic movement in Czechoslovakia was similar in its aims to the movement for socialist democracy in the USSR. It was possible to read in our press the fundamental statements of the Czech Communist Party. For example, it was not at all difficult to read the Czech CP's 'Programme of Action' of April 1968. But Afghanistan . . . for many the revolution was a complete surprise and the situation in the country little known.

Secondly, at the end of 1968 the dissident movement in the USSR was on the ascent and several thousands of people took part in it. Today this movement has almost ceased as a result of repression and emigration. Dissidents in the Soviet Union today are numbered in tens only, that is if those in prison are excluded. Thirdly, many of the most respected members of the intelligentsia consider that the government had no other option but to go into Afghanistan, although the decision was a difficult one. People believe that it is important to retain a Soviet presence in Afghanistan against the Chinese threat in the east. There is not one single opinion about Afghanistan in the same way as there was about Czechoslovakia.

Dissatisfaction with the intervention in Afghanistan is voiced not so much by the representatives of the intelligentsia as by the simple people, often from the provinces, who think it is wrong for the government to help foreign countries when there is a shortage of goods at home. This type of sentiment is not new—it goes back to the period when the Soviet Union gave a lot of aid to Egypt and other Arab countries. Such views have been expressed even in relation to the help given to Cuba. For the government none of this is very important and such dissatisfaction is simply dismissed as reflecting the backward and more philistine side of the people. In the 1950s when I lived in the provinces I often

heard people say that the government was wrong to give so much aid to China. The protest in this case is economic and does not have an ideological or political character.

Many in the intelligentsia point out that in Czechoslovakia the Soviet forces suppressed the development of 'socialism with a human face' but in Afghanistan the Soviet Union has intervened against feudalism and reaction. In August 1968 one old Bolshevik friend of mine used to ask people who came to visit him, 'Do you approve of the invasion of Czechoslovakia?' If the guest replied 'Yes', then my friend would refuse to invite him in and would cease to have anything to do with him. This old Bolshevik is still alive and well. But he fully approves of the Soviet action in Afghanistan, while still holding the same view as before about Czechoslovakia.

It is difficult to know what the outcome of the intervention in Afghanistan will be but can you say what you think the consequences will be on the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet government?

People's opinions on the outcome of the events differ. Personally, I think that it is impossible to appraise the events in Afghanistan without taking into consideration the crisis in relations between the USA and Iran. If, for example, the USA takes military action in Iran then the rest of the world might look differently upon the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan: there are far more interests ready to collide in the Persian Gulf than was the case in Afghanistan. There is a growing world crisis at the moment and the events in Afghanistan are only one link in its development. It is difficult to say at present how all this will end but it seems to me that whatever happens the consequences will be bad. The dangers in the present situation are numerous. As a result of the recent events, for example, both Western countries and the Soviet Union have abandoned the pursuit of policies aimed at relaxing international tension. In other words Western and Soviet policy towards one another has become more hawkish.

The internal politics of the Soviet government also will become harsher as a result of recent events because the government will no longer have to worry about this or that circle of opinion in the West. This is already apparent in the increase in repression at the end of 1979 and beginning of 1980: Academician Sakharov was exiled from Moscow and many well-known dissident writers have decided to leave.

To what extent do you think that recent events have put back the cause of socialist democracy in the USSR?

I have said above that in conditions of international crisis the government follows a more hawkish line in internal and foreign policy. But it would be mistaken to say that the cause of democratization has become more difficult since democratization was not taking place before the intervention in Afghanistan. In the second half of the 1970s the situation in this country has been getting worse from the point of view of democratization. It is not just a question of the repression of dissidents—there has been an increase in the censorship of artistic works, it

has become more difficult than previously to read discussions about social issues and there has even been a noticeable decline in the availability of foreign communist party newspapers. Often the English and Italian communist party newspapers (the *Morning Star* and *Unità*) are unavailable two or three days in a week, and it is difficult to get hold of them in libraries. The crisis in the international situation has resulted in a restriction of the democratic rights of citizens. The question of the longer term consequences for democratization in the USSR however is connected not so much with international affairs as with the character and politics of the new leadership that will take over from the present one in the USSR in the near future. In the whole 63 year history of the USSR there have been only four changes of leadership (the Lenin era, the Stalin era, the Krushchev era, the Brezhnev era) and with each there has been a major change in foreign, and even more so, domestic policy. We can assume that this 'law' will hold for the 1980s. I think that the 1980s will be much more difficult for us than the 1970s. But perhaps this very difficulty will prove to be a stimulus for greater democratization of the country. In this I have not lost all hope.

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122 *new left review*

DILEMMAS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

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Civil War in El Salvador

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The Electoral Impasse

Gregor Benton

China's Oppositions

Elizabeth Wilson

Welfare and the Crisis

John Goode

The Moment of 'Scrutiny'

| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 1 | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>Harald Jung</i> | Class Struggles in El Salvador |
| 27 | <i>Adam Przeworski</i> | Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon |
| 59 | <i>Gregor Benton</i> | China's Oppositions |

REVIEWS

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 79 | <i>Elizabeth Wilson</i> | The Political Economy of Welfare |
| 90 | <i>John Goode</i> | The Moment of 'Scrutiny' |

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The overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua last year re-opened the historic struggle of the peoples of Central America for liberation from oligarchic rule, savage military terror, imperialist subjugation and social backwardness. The military junta in El Salvador is now besieged by a powerful array of popular forces, including four trade union federations, five political parties and dozens of peasant and student organizations. Following the coup of November 1979 the junta has sought to stamp out opposition through a combination of pre-emptive reforms and an escalating campaign of repression. The popular forces are now subject to daily 'reprisals' at the hands of the official and unofficial security agencies. In March the junta's most prominent critic, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero, was assassinated by rightists and the wave of counter-revolutionary violence rose to new heights. In this issue Harald Jung examines the social order which the junta, and its sponsors in Washington, are determined to defend at the cost of so much bloodshed. Fourteen families furnish the backbone of the Salvadorean capitalist and landowning oligarchy, but its power is greatly strengthened by the paramilitary organization of a stratum of rich peasants, small merchants and of the unemployed or 'marginal' population. Jung traces the emergence of this important instrument of oligarchic rule and suggests that it makes a civil war more likely than a swift repetition of Somoza's overthrow. Moreover on this occasion US imperialism seems poised to give more ample support to the Salvadorean military than was available to Somoza in the last months of his rule. In the coming period an informed and vigilant solidarity with the liberation struggle in El Salvador must be a priority.

In recent years there have been attempts to reformulate the politics of social democracy. In Europe renovated Socialist Parties have appeared in France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece while in Austria and West Germany the ruling Social Democratic parties have made far-reaching adjustments to their prolonged occupation of Government. In both North and South America novel attempts are being made to build local versions of social democracy. In Britain the campaign launched by the Labour left challenges the traditional autonomy of the parliamentary caucus and seeks to impose its 'alternative economic strategy' upon any future Labour government. The examination of the classic dilemmas of social democracy by Adam Przeworski, which we publish in this issue, is therefore particularly timely. He argues that the electoralist orientation of social democracy obliges it to sacrifice workplace organization to

parliamentary representation and to choose between remaining a minority party of workers or cultivating a broad popular constituency at the expense of its class base. When in government social democratic parties either capitulate to capitalist pressure or risk provoking an economic dislocation which they cannot induce their electoral supporters to accept. The critique developed by Przeworski is particularly valuable in view of its wide-ranging documentation and novel approach to familiar problems.

The introduction or extension of welfare services has been acclaimed by social democrats as their most important achievement, while Marxist analysts have focused on the ways in which welfare provision has been subsumed within the dynamic of capitalist accumulation and its need for the expanded reproduction of labour power. With the onset of renewed capitalist crisis, however, social democracy has been unable to improve upon, or even to defend, past levels of social provision while popular support for welfare programmes has weakened as monetarist policy has assailed them. Elizabeth Wilson's review of 'The Political Economy of Welfare' by Ian Gough assesses the current state of socialist debate on the nature of welfare provision and on the reasons for waning popular commitment to present-day welfare institutions.

The history of Chinese Communism has been punctuated by bursts of apparently audacious political experiment followed by reimposition of bureaucratic control. A striking aspect of Peking's politics today is its extremely reactionary foreign policy; its unhinged anti-Sovietism; its crude alignment with the far right of imperialism; its cynical alliance with Pol Pot; and its disgraceful invasion of Vietnam. But within China itself the evolution of political struggles within the Party leadership permitted a period of relaxation in 1979 during which a series of new oppositions emerged. In our last issue we published the manifesto for a 'Return to Genuine Marxism' by Wang Xizhe which surfaced at this time. In this issue Gregor Benton surveys the new Chinese oppositions and compares them with previous oppositional movements in the chequered history of the Chinese revolution.

Class Struggles in El Salvador

The military coup in El Salvador of October 15th 1979 provoked a new and remarkable twist in the bloody social conflicts which have wracked this Central American republic. The former dictator, General Humberto Romero, was replaced by a junta which proclaimed the need for sweeping reforms and which initially attracted the support of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Communists. The most important groups of the armed revolutionary left maintained an attitude of watchful hostility towards the reformist junta, and in the days following the coup there were clashes in several working class districts around the capital between the army and the leftist guerrillas. It quickly became clear that the new government could not carry through its programme of reforms in most parts of the country and was unable either to suppress rightist terrorism directed at the popular forces, or even to control its own military and security apparatus. In December the Social Democrats and Communists withdrew support from the junta and in subsequent months some of the Christian Democrats have followed suit. On March 24th Archbishop Oscar

Romero was assassinated; on the previous day he had made an impassioned appeal for an end to military repression and had declared that soldiers were not obliged to obey orders that were contrary to their conscience. Between January and June over two thousand people were killed as a result of official or paramilitary violence, while in May the Salvadorian high command declared that two northern provinces, Morazan and Chalatenango, were 'military emergency zones'. In January and mid-April the oppositional guerrilla forces moved to form a wider united front and to integrate some of those who had formerly supported the reformist Government set up in October 1979. The mounting popular opposition to military repression in El Salvador has often been compared to the last stages of the struggle against Somoza in Nicaragua. Yet, as we will see, El Salvador's particular socio-economic and political development has been different from that of Nicaragua and does not lay the basis for the same type of polarizations. In El Salvador the rightest para-military groups can command some sectional support while the military sponsored government continues to proclaim the need for reform and to receive the support of some Christian Democrats and of the United States.

Socio-Economic Development in the Countryside

El Salvador remains as ever an agricultural country. In 1974 agriculture made up 26 per cent of the GNP, and in 1977 it provided around four-fifths of revenues from exports.¹ In 1975 more than 60 per cent of the population were classed as agricultural. The rural sector is thus of fundamental importance for all political developments.

The division in land utilization between cattle-raising haciendas and villages cultivating maize, which dated from the colonial epoch, was overridden by the introduction of coffee planting. Between 1880 and 1912, the common lands of the villages in the hilly volcanic regions were for the most part sold to urban middle- and upper-class families at give-away prices, a small portion alone being distributed among the villagers. Since the coffee tree needs five years growth before its first harvest, its cultivation is only possible for persons with a certain amount of capital, and hardly at all for small farmers, for whom the land has to provide their basic foodstuffs. Right from the beginning, therefore, coffee was concentrated pre-eminently in the hands of a small and relatively rich coffee bourgeoisie owning large estates.

At first, these big coffee planters maintained the traditional relations of production that existed on the haciendas. The workers (*colonos*) received a plot of land on which to cultivate food crops in return for their work for the landowner. Since in the coffee-growing regions, however, the land left to the *colonos* could be more profitably used for coffee cultivation, the *colono* system was already replaced by wage labour in the 1920s. The workers no longer received any land for their

¹ J. W. Wilkie and P. Reich (eds), *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*, Vol. 18 Los Angeles 1977, p. 308; Banco Central de Reserva, *Revista BCN*, San Salvador, July 1978; Naciones Unidas, *Realidad campesina y desarrollo nacional 5*, El Salvador, New York 1976, Table 1.

own use, but only a primitive hut on the estate. During the 1940s and 1950s, with the extension of coffee cultivation (annual receipts from coffee exports rose by a factor of ten), the number of landless rural labourers also rose in proportion to the traditional *colonos*. In the 1950s, modern technology took root in coffee cultivation and made possible a reduction of the permanently employed labour force. In the 1960s, the era of the Alliance for Progress, social legislation and a guaranteed minimum wage was introduced for the permanent employees, so as to forestall the radicalization of the growing (illegal) trade-union organization in the countryside. The coffee bourgeoisie subsequently counteracted the tendencies of the workers to organize, as well as the minimum wage, by seeking to reduce to a minimum the number of permanent employees, replacing labour by capital, so that they only needed to employ a larger number of workers for the short periods of harvesting. A mobile rural proletariat of seasonal workers now grew up, with the chance of finding employment on the coffee estates only between November and March.

This process of replacing permanent employees by seasonal workers, which in coffee cultivation took place only slowly on account of the relatively narrow limits of mechanization imposed by natural conditions, was repeated far more violently in cotton cultivation. The rapidly rising demand for cotton on the world market in the early 1950s opened up the lower lying valleys and coastal areas to agricultural production for export. The land used for cotton was generally leased by the big landlords to capitalist farmers. 52 per cent of the cotton fields, at the beginning of the 1970s, were leased in this way, with 83 per cent being operated by middle and large enterprises.² The *colonos* of the haciendas, who had no legal title to the land that they tilled, had to make way. Since cotton cultivation required still less labour than cattle-raising, and experienced an enormous intensification in the course of the 1950s (the yield per hectare doubling from 1950 to 1960)³, only a small proportion of the former *colonos* found work in cotton growing, and generally only then during the months of harvest. From *colono*, they became landless peasants and seasonal workers.

Coffee and cotton remain El Salvador's principal export products. In the late 1970s, coffee comprised between 80 and 90 per cent of export revenue, and cotton between 10 and 15 per cent.⁴ The growth of a mobile rural proletariat, employed only on a seasonal basis, can thus be seen as characteristic for virtually the entire agricultural export sector. At the same time, the mechanization of the agricultural export economy led to a reduction in the number of workers employed in agriculture from 310,097 in 1961 to 267,079 in 1975.⁵ The old *colono* system now exists on only a few obsolete haciendas, although in the late 1960s, a middle strata of peasants managed to develop and become quite significant on the basis of sugar cultivation.

² P. Dorner and R. Quiros, 'Institutional Dualism in Central America's Agricultural Development', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 5, Cambridge 1973, p. 228.

³ H. Trujillo and O. Menjiva, 'Economía y política en la revolución del 48', *Estudios Centroamericanos* 361-362, San Salvador, Nov.-Dec. 1978, p. 884.

⁴ Banco Central de Reserva, op. cit.

⁵ International Labour Office, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1970*, Geneva 1970 pp. 82. ff., and *ibid.* 1978, pp. 78 ff.

The expansion of the agricultural export sector also had its effects on the peasant subsistence economy and the small peasants. In El Salvador 10 hectares is generally taken as the minimum amount of land required to support an average peasant family. In 1971, only 19,951 (5.2 per cent) out of 384,540 families engaged in agriculture possessed 10 hectares or more. 15.6 per cent cultivated between 2 and 10 hectares, and 245,015 (63.7 per cent) less than 1 hectare.⁶ Of the peasants with less than 1 hectare, only 24 per cent actually owned the land that they tilled, as did only 31 per cent of the peasants with between 1 and 2 hectares.⁷ The great mass of small peasants are thus directly affected by changes in the conditions of farm leases.

Traditionally, the big landowners leased out portions of their land to small peasants on a share-cropping basis. This pre-capitalist rent in kind was gradually replaced from the 1950s onwards by a variable money rent, with the expansion of the export economy and the emergence of capitalist farmers. The small peasants could not pay the rising land prices and rents, and had to move out.

The rural banking sector controlled by the agricultural bourgeoisie also compelled many peasants to give up their holdings. Between 1961 and 1975 export-oriented undertakings received between 80 and 90 per cent of agricultural credits. 87 per cent of all these credits, in 1971, went to farms with more than 10 hectares, and only 1 per cent to farms with less than 1 hectare.⁸ 95 per cent of the land belonging to farms with less than 2 hectares was used in 1971 for the production of basic necessities.⁹ In the context of an export-oriented agricultural policy, it seemed inopportune to promote this. Many small peasants were therefore forced before harvest time either to borrow from local money-lenders at exorbitant interest rates, or else to sell their crops in advance at cut-price, simply so as to feed their families. They thus got into a chronic cycle of unending debt,¹⁰ and had sooner or later to sell their land.

The processes of expropriation and expulsion of small peasants, side by side with a simultaneous reduction in employment in the expanding export cultivations, were aggravated in their social consequences because of the limited amount of land available in El Salvador for agriculture, and an annual population growth of 3.1 per cent. In 1975, the total population stood at 4.1 million, a density of 192 per square kilometer. A steadily growing number of independent peasants were thus pressed together on a shrinking area. From 1950 to 1961 the number of farms with less than 10 hectares rose in the cotton-growing regions by 72 per cent, while the average size of these farms fell by

⁶ *Censos Nacionales de 1971, III. Censo Agropecuario*, San Salvador 1971, p. 22; Naciones Unidas, *La transformación del campo y la situación económica y social de las familias rurales en El Salvador*, New York, 1976, Tables 12, 18.

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ G. E. Karush, 'Plantations, Population, and Poverty: The Roots of the Demographic Crisis in El Salvador', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 13, 3, New Brunswick 1978, pp. 67 ff.

⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁰ Banco Hipotecario de El Salvador, *El crédito agrícola en El Salvador*, San Salvador, 1967 (Vol. 1), 1970 (Vol. 2), particularly Vol. 2, p. 60.

54 per cent.¹¹ From 1961 to 1975, the number of independent peasants, together with their dependants, rose from 176,051 to 339,601.¹² From 1961 to 1971, the number of peasant families with less than 10 hectares grew by 126,839, out of which the number of families with under 2 hectares grew by 37,194 and the number of completely landless peasant families by 81,657. The number of peasant families with more than 10 hectares grew by only 354.¹³

The big export businesses became ever more concentrated in a few hands. In 1971, 0.5 per cent of all agricultural enterprises (those with more than 200 hectares) farmed some 34 per cent of the agricultural area, while 52 per cent of the peasants (those with less than 2 hectares) farmed only 3.7 per cent. Since one family often owns several large agricultural holdings, the real extent of concentration is still higher. In 1971, six families alone possessed as much land as 80 per cent of the rural population together.¹⁴

This situation can be summed up as follows:

1. The agricultural export sector is in the hands of a small number of families.
2. Over the last three decades, permanent workers in the agricultural export cultivations have been increasingly replaced by migrant workers employed only seasonally.
3. The expansion of the export sector is reducing the agricultural land that remains for the small peasants. At the same time, the number of jobs in export cultivations is on the decline, so that a growing agricultural population has to feed itself as peasants off a shrunken area of land. For three decades the size of these peasant farms has been declining, and 95 per cent of them do not have sufficient land to guarantee their own subsistence. These small peasants have to compete with the landless seasonal workers for jobs on the big exporting estates.
4. Some 64 per cent of rural families are seasonal and migrant workers, with no land or less than 1 hectare. Their number is growing rapidly, particularly the number of completely landless families, even though the number of jobs for wage-workers in agriculture is declining. This means a constant rise in underemployment and unemployment in the countryside.¹⁵

¹¹ P. Domer and R. Quiros, p. 221.

¹² International Labour Office, op. cit.

¹³ As note 6.

¹⁴ G. E. Karush, op. cit.

¹⁵ In 1975 the number of permanent unemployed in the rural sector was estimated at 274,000, i.e. more than 45 per cent of all those active in that sector. (Naciones Unidas, *Realidad campesina* . . . , Table 1; International Labour Office, op. cit.). Between February and October, underemployment in the countryside is generally more than 50 per cent, rising in some months to as much as 80 per cent. (M. Burke, *The Proletarianization of Agricultural Labour in Latin America: The Case of El Salvador*, mimeographed, 1976, p. 35.)

Socio-Economic Development in the Towns

The industrial development that has taken place since 1930 and particularly in the 1960s proved unable to absorb the labour-power set free in the agricultural sector. Due to the low purchasing power of the mass of the population, and the preference for luxury import goods on the part of those with most money to spend, the local market could only develop a weak demand for locally produced consumption goods. Manufacturing industry, therefore, is not just the further development of traditional handicrafts, but predominantly a capital-intensive export industry concentrated in the hands of a few big bourgeois families. Often the same families accumulated wealth in the agricultural export sector, financed the industrialization boom of the 1960s, and subsequently themselves became industrial capitalists. At the present time, the entire economy of El Salvador is dominated by some fourteen families, all involved in agriculture, finance and industry, even if their specializations are somewhat different.

The development of a capital-intensive export industry only created a small number of new industrial jobs. Between 1961 and 1971 the manufacturing sector grew by 24 per cent, while the number of people employed in this sector grew by only 6 per cent.¹⁶ The number of employees in manufacturing as a proportion of the economically active population fell from around 13 per cent in 1961 to some 10 per cent in 1971 and 1975.¹⁷ The number of workers in manufacturing industry grew by only 2500 between 1961 and 1971.¹⁸ The number of wage-earners in the sectors of mining, manufacturing, construction and transport, storage and communication (i.e. those that could be described as the classical industrial proletariat) remained virtually constant throughout the 1960s, and only began to increase after 1971, rising by 32,000 to a total of 152,000 in 1975.

In the wake of the industrialization of 1961-1975, the total number of wage-earners not employed in agriculture grew by about one-third, from 246,000 to 361,000. The total of self-employed in the non-agricultural sectors, however, almost tripled in the same period, from 68,000 to 193,000.¹⁸ This expresses on the one hand the sharp growth of an independent middle class, on the other a process of marginalization. Out of these 193,000 independently active, 131,000 were involved in commerce and 11,000 in the service sector.¹⁹ Both these categories in statistics for developing countries generally conceal a vast number of shoe-shiners, lottery-ticket sellers, street traders, prostitutes, washerwomen, etc. The number of self-employed in commerce grew from 47,000 in 1971 to 131,000 in 1975, but it can hardly be assumed that in these four years El Salvador, with an increase of 122,000 in the total number of economically active, counted 84,000 successful new businesspeople among these.²⁰ In 1975, 126,000 urban

¹⁶ M. Burke, p. 45.

¹⁷ International Labour Office, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

wage-earners were employed in the service sector.²¹ This total also conceals untold thousands of marginalized people, most of whom have fled into the cities from under-employment and unemployment in the countryside. The capital-intensive export industry could not provide sufficient jobs for these migrants, and compelled them to lead a marginalized existence in the ever growing slum districts in and around San Salvador.

To sum up: Industrialization produced an industrial proletariat that comprises 42 per cent of all urban wage-earners and 27 per cent of all these economically active in the urban sector. Compared with other developing countries, the industrial proletariat is thus relatively well developed in the urban sector. At the same time, the middle class of self-employed and people active in professional services and commerce has expanded. Most of all, however, there has been an explosion in the number of petty retailers and street traders, now running into the tens of thousands. These traders should be classed as marginalized people without adequate income. The surplus of petty traders reduce one another's sales and profit potentials.²² The number of those marginalized elements who perform personal services and odd jobs should also be estimated in tens of thousands. Among others, this group includes the more than 40 per cent of all urban wage-earners who in 1974 were receiving less than the legal minimum wage of 28.70 *colones* (about £5) per week.²³ But the economic position of the industrial workers has also deteriorated in the 1970s. While the number of these workers has risen, the index of real industrial wages had fallen by 1975 back to the level of 1965, after rising briefly until 1970-71.²⁴

The Political Implications of Social Stratification

The political developments in El Salvador must be viewed against this socio-economic background. The expansion of the agricultural export sector did not mean a simple proletarianization of the peasants, a process that would have smoothly transformed the agricultural population into a revolutionary subject. This interpretation, of a kind often met with in the works of left-wing writers, may well be correct in the long run. In a shorter timescale, however—and in El Salvador this has been under way for at least 40 years—the transformation that follows in the wake of the expansion of the agricultural export sector gives rise to a whole range of different groups of peasants and agricultural wage-workers, with very different immediate interests based on differing relations of economic dependence. These different immediate interests of small peasants, seasonal workers, worker-peasants, small farmers, permanent plantation workers, etc., time and again serve to impede and destroy the political unification of the agricultural population, even though all these elements are completely subject to a common exploitation by the agricultural oligarchy. This is all the more

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² There are no comprehensive data for this. A. White, however, has convincingly demonstrated the situation on the basis of trade in certain particular commodities. (A. White, *El Salvador*, London 1973, pp. 148-51.)

²³ M. Burke, p. 46.

²⁴ J. W. Wilkie and P. Reich, p. 222.

true for on agricultural population which has to compete for the daily necessities of life on an inadequate land surface and in a hopelessly overfilled labour market. And this competition does not merely determine whether life is more or less comfortable, it also determines the very life or death (from starvation) of individual family members. Political conduct, 'good' or 'bad', can lead to a peasant having his conditions of existence taken away, it can decide which out of three or four seasonal workers gets the one job, whether a permanently employed agricultural worker continues in his privileged position, etc.

Similar factors destroying the solidarity of the exploited masses also exist in the towns. The wage struggles of the industrial proletariat, to which the urban trade unions confined their activity during the 1960s, can scarcely manage to win the solidarity of those who rarely receive a wage. The masses of marginalized elements, as an industrial reserve army, pose a constant latent threat to unskilled workers. For any worker who is fired, there are ten unemployed who are ready to take his or her place. These marginalized masses are in constant competition for the few irregular jobs in the street markets, in personal services, petty crime, etc. The petty bourgeoisie and the urban middle strata similarly have their own particular interests. 'Society is transformed into a conglomerate of people fighting for their survival, without considering or reflecting on who are their true enemies', in the words of a group of Salvadorian social scientists, who characterize their country's society as 'disintegrated and organized along alienated lines of battle'.²⁵

Given an existence of this kind, whether individual and sectoral particular interests end up preventing or dissolving the process of political solidarity and unification of the exploited population is decisively dependent on the extent to which the rulers manage to reinforce these particular interests politically. This is all the more so in that those social sectors that might potentially be united have only a relatively short history, lacking a tradition of struggle that dates back even one generation, such as might be able to harmonise differing immediate interests of particular social groups in the interest of a long-run goal.

Political Development Up to the 1970s

The El Salvador military regime understood very early the possibilities of this situation for a policy of 'divide and rule'. Already in January 1932, only a month after seizing power, the military rulers received an important lesson.

In the 1920s groups of working-class activists had arisen among the urban artisan population, defining themselves as Communists in the wake of the Russian revolution. Between 1928 and 1931 coffee prices and the wages of coffee workers fell by more than 50 per cent. Against this background, the Communist and revolutionary trade unions in

²⁵ ECA-Editorial, 'Apertura democrática, una salida a la crisis nacional', *Estudios Centroamericanos* 359, Sept. 1978, p. 683.

the west of El Salvador succeeded in organizing some 80,000 workers in the coffee plantations, and leading major strikes and demonstrations. The relatively free presidential elections of 1930 saw these working-class activists supporting the coffee planter Arturo Araujo, who presented himself as a champion of reform. On assuming office, however, Araujo found himself unable to carry out his promised reforms, owing to the precarious economic situation. The generals accused the President of incompetence, overthrowing him at the end of 1931 and appointing General Martínez as President. In January 1932 Martínez permitted local elections to be held with the participation of the Communists. After the Communists had won the vote in certain coffee-producing districts in the west of the country, the generals refused to allow them to take office. The Communists called for an uprising. On the night of 22nd-23rd January, agricultural workers armed with machetes attacked and occupied public buildings in the western districts. The revolt 'was concentrated in the western coffee-growing areas, where coffee had already spread to cover most of the ground in the areas of cultivable altitude, and the rural population was already almost completely dependent on seasonal wage labour on the coffee plantations; there was no space left for them to plant subsistence crops. This process had not gone so far in the eastern coffee-producing zone where there was no revolt.'²⁶ The uprising came to grief due to the division between the pure wage-workers and the *colonos* and worker-peasants. The generals butchered between twenty and thirty thousand workers.

Martínez found a *modus vivendi* with the Salvadorian bourgeoisie. The military kept the office of President and the politically important ministries, while the key positions in economic policy were filled by representatives of the bourgeoisie, and in part completely withdrawn from state control. All matters of management and regulation that bore on the cultivation and marketing of coffee were dealt with not by the ministry of agriculture, but by associations and organizations of the coffee bourgeoisie itself. This applied also to the Central Reserve Bank and the Banco Hipotecario, the latter controlling credit to the rural sector. This division of functions between the military and the bourgeoisie continued right through to the 1970s, and emerged intact from all government crises and coups. Political differences within this bourgeois-military alliance, between the reform-oriented forces and those that were exclusively repressive, cut through the bourgeoisie and the military alike.

During the Second World War the Salvadorian economy experienced a recovery which gave an impetus to the democratic forces among the urban workers and artisans, who revolted in 1944 against the extremely repressive regime of the time. These received active support from the students, and even from sections of the bourgeoisie and the military. Even though Martínez was able to suppress the rebellion, the US ambassador in El Salvador declared him 'redundant', and he resigned. Following a democratic interlude in summer 1944, the purely

²⁶ A. White, p. 101.

repressive faction of the army pushed its way to power again, until it was overthrown in its turn in December 1948 by a new military coup led by Oscar Osorio.

Osorio and his successor Lemus (after 1956) aimed to establish a second pillar for the system alongside the bourgeois-military alliance, by reinforcing the division between workers, peasants and the marginalized population. Their policy was to split these sectors along three lines in the following fashion:

1. While the formation of trade unions still remained illegal in the countryside, and the agricultural export economy could expand without government regulation, in the towns a policy of industrialization was pursued, giving the growing industrial working class a certain privilege vis-à-vis the mass of the population. These workers were granted a relative freedom of trade-union organization, a minimum wage legislation and a system of social welfare, as well as a housing programme.
2. While the agricultural workers and the small peasants practising a subsistence economy were prey to the expansion of export cultivation, with no protection from the state, the military sought to create or maintain a stratum of middle peasants, involved in family-based commodity production, by way of state credits and the control of basic grain prices.
3. While moderate demands for reform as well as wage demands were granted to the urban trade unions, revolutionary forces, whether within or outside of the trade unions, were mercilessly persecuted, imprisoned and murdered.

Despite this policy, by 1959-60 the militant left in the towns had so gained in strength that one section of the military and the bourgeoisie saw their only opportunity to stave off crisis in far-reaching reforms. In 1960 they overthrew Lemus, formed a transitional government together with socialist representatives of the working class, and prepared to hold free elections in which the militant left was also permitted to take part. This sharp turn to the left led to a new military coup in 1961 under Julio Rivera. Since the support for the transitional government lay principally in the towns, the mass of the agricultural population being still unorganized and to a large extent uninvolved, any resistance was condemned in advance to failure. For a second time, the divisions between the popular sectors played into the hands of the military in a crisis situation.

Julio Rivera and his successor Fidel Sánchez Rivera (after 1967) understood these lessons well. They refined the divisions and strengthened them organizationally. In the towns a new middle stratum had grown up in the wake of industrialization. The generals permitted this stratum to organize political parties. In the universities the regime permitted the left a certain freedom of debate. The urban working class were allowed to organize trade unions for the purpose of wage demands, while working-class militants, and groups that

aimed at any social transformation, were still persecuted and even murdered. In the countryside, trade-union organization continued to be forbidden. At the same time, however, 1965 was set as the date for social and minimum-wage legislation for the permanently employed rural workers, so that these were given a certain privilege over the mass of seasonal workers.

The regime then began to organize the groups and individuals whom it had thus privileged. In the 1950s, already, the ruling circles and their party, the Partido de Conciliación Nacional (pcn) sought to build up trade unions among the urban working class that were friendly towards the regime. They gradually succeeded in establishing the Confederación General de Sindicatos (cgs) which at the beginning of the 1960s had more than 15,000 members, twice as many as the left-wing independent unions. In 1957-58 most of the latter had combined to form the Confederación General de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (cgrs). By a combination of concessions to the industrial working class on the one hand, and brutal suppression of left-wing unionists on the other, the regime forced these independent unions from the mid 1960s onwards to confine their activity to economic demands. This abandonment of political demands and struggles found expression in the replacement of the cgrs by the Federación Unitaria Sindical de El Salvador (fuss).

In the countryside, any attempt at autonomous organization was brutally suppressed. At the same time, however, the military regime attempted to win certain sections of impoverished peasants behind it. In the early 1960s it began to build up a para-military anti-revolutionary organization in the countryside called the Organización Democrática Nacionalista (ORDEN). By 1964-65 ORDEN had already assumed a firm structure. It won its members by helping them to escape the worst poverty. Small peasants who joined the organization could be granted favourable credit terms, while seasonal workers could hope for permanent employment. Privileged members or sympathisers of ORDEN would be engaged for public works in the rural districts. In some cases hospital beds or school places were provided for ORDEN members and their families. For many small peasants, ORDEN provided the only escape from poverty. In return, the ORDEN members supervised the villages in which they lived, reported attempts at subversion, watched over the rest of the agricultural population, and sometimes actually liquidated those who were rebellious. By the early 1970s, ORDEN had covered every village and town with a dense network of informers and collaborators. While the number of armed and militarily organized members of ORDEN never rose above 10,000, it is estimated to have had up to sixty or a hundred thousand loose or occasional collaborators. If family members are added, we can say that at least one- to two-tenths of the entire rural population were linked up with ORDEN in one way or another. ORDEN directly supported the Guardia Nacional and the president. The generals thus understood how to extract political benefit for their regime from the very poverty of the agricultural population.

The Development of Resistance

The industrialization and political 'liberalization' in the towns was accompanied by the development of urban opposition parties and groups. Whereas the bourgeoisie traditionally occupied the key posts in the governing party (PCN) together with the military, during the 1960s a political tendency with the slogan of democratization gained strength even within the fourteen great families of El Salvador. This faction was led by the De Sola family and their Mirafior group of companies, who became consistent opponents of the military regime in the course of the 1970s.

The development of new urban middle strata—either petty bourgeoisie or highly skilled professionals—gave the Partido Democrat-Cristiano (PDC) its social base. The PDC, formed in 1960, stood for a policy of reform, in which positions of the Chilean Christian-Democrats mingled with social democratic elements. The party demanded freedom of organization for agricultural workers and an economic policy that would accelerate national development by the full use of labour-power, rather than the employment of modern machines that had to be paid for by foreign debts. The PDC attracted a steadily growing support in the towns, and in the countryside it organized the first groups of rural workers and peasants out of which the revolutionary people's organizations of the mid 1970s were to emerge.

An older party of liberal opposition, the Partido Acción Renovadora (PAR), also took a turn to the left in the mid 1960s, and adopted left social democrat positions. It called for a fundamental agrarian reform, a far-reaching programme of labour procurement by the government, a national co-operative for the marketing and storage of agricultural products, progressive income tax, and a social policy in the interest of the underprivileged sectors.

Once the 1967 elections had shown that the reforming social-democrat positions had found a strong base among the urban working class, the PAR was banned by the military regime. In place of the PAR, there appeared a party of social democrat intellectuals, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), founded in 1964-65, and the Unión Democrática Nacionalista (UDN), founded in 1968-69, which incorporated former politicians from the left wing of the PAR, and was also strongly influenced by the illegal Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS).

The PCS had increasingly oriented itself after the defeated insurrection of 1932 to trade-union work in the towns, and in the 1960s it confined even this trade-union work to economic demands. Both the Communist-dominated Confederación Unificada de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (CURS), with some 26,000 members, and the other major urban trade-union grouping Fesinconstans, with about 28,000, had stood almost exclusively for economic demands, up to the beginning of the 1970s. On the political level, the PCS agitated chiefly for democratic reforms. In the universities it played an important role in organizing Marxist discussion circles, out of which the first beginnings of a guerilla struggle developed in the course of the 1970s.

It can broadly be said that up to the end of the 1960s the agricultural population was either not organized at all, or was organized in the interest of the regime, while in the towns the middle strata and the working class overwhelmingly followed christian democrat and social democratic orientations, while the trade unions confined themselves to economic demands. Only in the early 1970s did a broad-based process of radicalization commence, for which the following factors were responsible.

1. 1969 saw a war between El Salvador and Honduras, attributable essentially to an ever-growing indebtedness of Honduras towards El Salvador²⁷ and to the illegal immigration of tens of thousands to Honduras. After the war the border between the two countries was closed, and Salvadorians driven off the land could no longer move across to the relatively thinly settled Honduras. The number of marginalized and completely landless people rose in the early 1970s by leaps and bounds.

2. The number of industrial workers also underwent a steep rise in the first half of the 1970s. At the same time the real wage level constantly fell. The purely economic policy of the trade unions, which had still been successful in the 1960s, had come up against its limits.

3. The PDC, MNR and UDN had combined for the presidential elections of 1972 into the Unión Nacional de Oposición (UNO), under the leadership of the Christian Democrat Napoleón Duarte. It was only through blatant electoral fraud that the PCN managed to secure the victory of its presidential candidate. A constitutionalist faction in the army made a coup against the illegal government and installed Duarte as president. After a few days, however, Duarte was overthrown by the reactionary majority of the armed forces under Colonel Molina. Molina became president. Duarte was imprisoned and exiled, along with many other politicians from the urban opposition parties. These reform oriented parties were thus thrown into uncompromising opposition to the regime.

4. The regime stepped up its repression against even the reformist left. Numerous intellectuals and trade unionists were imprisoned and expelled from the country. ORDEN and the terrorist organizations of the radical right began a policy of systematic persecution and assassination of trade unionists, peasant leaders and intellectuals. Persecution of the urban and reformist organizations also led to their radicalization and to attempts to bring the reformist forces, whose perspectives had come up against their economic and political limits, together with the revolutionary groups.

In June 1974, the peasant league Federación Católica de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS), set up in the 1960s by the Christian Democrats

²⁷ In the context of the Central American common market, El Salvador, with its higher level of industrial development, exchanges solely industrial goods against agricultural products from Honduras. The same kind of inequality producing exchange takes place here on a small scale as between the industrialized countries and the Third World.

and the Catholic church, combined together with the left trade-union organization FUSC, the teachers' union ANDES, and other trade-union organizations, into the Frente de Acción Popular Unificada (FAPU). Representatives of the reform-oriented political parties took part in the FAPU as observers. FAPU viewed the Molinas regime as a fascist military dictatorship. In its strategic perspective, the mass organizations of the left, and the revolutionary sectors of workers, peasants, intellectuals and the church, should join together with the democratic and reformist forces into a broad political front (Frente Político Amplio) against the regime. By combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle, this front should struggle in the first instance against the rising cost of living, and for minimal democratic liberties.²⁸

The question of an alliance with the reformist forces, however, led to a split in the FAPU. The peasant league FECCAS, increasingly radicalized in a Marxist direction, split away from the FAPU in 1975. This move was followed by other mass organizations of the left. In the same year, FECCAS joined forces with the left-wing rural workers' Unión de Trabajadores del Campo (UTC) and certain urban trade unions and students' and teachers' organizations, to form the Bloque Popular Revolucionario (BPR). Since FECCAS and UTC, each with 6,000 members, were by far the strongest individual organizations of the militant left, the Bloque was not only the dominant opposition force in the agricultural sector, but the largest revolutionary organization in El Salvador in general. By 1978 the Bloque was estimated to have around 30,000 members.

The Bloque concentrated its activity on mobilizing and organizing the workers and peasants, and aimed to establish a revolutionary people's government (Gobierno Popular Revolucionario) on the basis of a workers' and peasants' alliance under proletarian leadership ('*alianza obrero-campesina con hegemonía proletaria*').²⁹ FAPU, on the other hand, remained more open to an alliance with the reformist parties and worked together with them on various committees. But FAPU, too, worked in the long run for a 'revolutionary people's government of workers and peasants'.

In parallel with these mass organizations, the early 1970s saw the development of a guerrilla struggle. The oldest guerrilla group, the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL) was formed in 1970 from the radical wing of the Communist Party and Marxist discussion circles in the universities. The FPL saw its activity as defence and protection against ORDEN and other repressive forces directed against the peasants' and workers' organizations. From 1967-77, the FPL was able to recruit a large number of workers as the repression against the trade unions was intensified.

The Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) was formed in 1972.

²⁸ FAPU, 'Junio de 1974: Fundación del FAPU', *Pueblo Internacional*, and FAPU, *Manifiesto histórico*, El Salvador, July 1979, pp. 1 ff.

²⁹ BPR, *Documento del Bloque Popular Revolucionario*, October 1979.

When one of its leaders, the historian and writer Roque Dalton García, criticized the military activism of the ERP and called for the subordination of armed struggle to political struggle, he was liquidated in 1975 by the militaristic faction of the ERP. This led to a split in the ERP and the foundation of the Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional (FARN). The FARN kidnapped several representatives of multinational firms in El Salvador, as well as members of the country's fourteen families, holding them for ransom, and obtaining more than 40 million dollars between 1975 and 1979. Even if the connections between the popular organizations and the guerrilla groups are not visible, it is clear that a part of this sum found its way to the popular organizations.

The Intensification of the Situation from the Mid 1970s

In the mid 1970s, the situation facing the military regime was as follows:

1. Against the background of an economic development locked in crisis, there was a rapid growth in the number of discontented workers, of landless and unemployed agriculturalists, and, in the slum quarters, of the marginalized population.
2. Revolutionary mass organizations had arisen alongside the mass organizations of the government. And while the lower strata of the population were still divided among themselves, now those that were hostile to the government were also organized.
3. The urban parties and trade unions that in the 1960s had been moderate and oriented to reform were now radicalized.
4. The state's monopoly of violence had been broken. If the security forces of the military and the reactionary bourgeoisie fired on the workers and peasants, then the guerrilla groups also fired on the military and the bourgeoisie.
5. The bourgeoisie was itself split into a reactionary wing and a wing with a democratic orientation. There were even constitutionalist groupings within the military itself, and these had proved strong enough in 1972 to make a coup against the electoral fraud.

In 1975-76 the Molina government sought to defuse this critical situation by a cautious agrarian reform. The rural oligarchy and the association of private businessmen, ANEP, raised a storm against even the first timid reform project. 59,000 hectares in the eastern cotton-growing region was to be distributed to 12,000 peasant families, and the big landowners were to receive the full market price. The proprietors affected organized themselves in the Eastern Region Farmers' Front (FARO), which soon spread right across the country and, together with ANEP, mobilized almost the entire private sector against the reform. This led to a government crisis, with the opponents of reform and the extreme right wing of the PCN and the military under General Romero emerging as victor. This right wing, together with ANEP and FARO, organized the radical right terrorist groups Falange and UGB, who proceeded with murder, torture and terror against both revolutionary and reformist forces in the trade unions, parties, popular organizations and church. By electoral fraud, this right wing under Romero managed to seize the presidency as well in 1977.

Only a few days after Romero's 'electoral victory', on 28 December 1977, the military massacred demonstrators in San Salvador. In memory of this massacre, a third left organization, formed in 1978, took the name Liga Popular 28 de Febrero (LP-28). Under Romero, ORDEN and the UGB stepped up their terror. For many reformists, there was no choice left but exile (even many members of the De Sola family left the country), or adhesion to the revolutionary underground. The revolutionaries defended themselves. While the reformist parties and organizations were robbed of their leaders and condemned to inactivity, a particular polarization took place in the rural sector. Every small town and even every village saw a split between the supporters of ORDEN (generally small peasants) and those of the Bloque and the FAPU (mostly rural labourers). ORDEN and the military persecuted every individual suspected of subversion, and 1977 saw bloody attacks upon sectors of the agricultural population. The popular organizations and guerrilla groups resisted bravely. In the rural districts, the beginnings of a civil war developed in the most literal sense of the term, growing still more intense after November 1977, when the 'law in defence and guarantee of public order' came into force. It was not just the armed forces that fought against the agricultural population in these regions, but the armed forces together with one section of the rural population who fought against the other section.

In San Salvador, members of the popular organizations occupied foreign embassies and churches, to draw attention to the massacres in the rural districts and compel the release of political prisoners. While the majority of the Catholic clergy supported the moderate opposition forces, a minority, under the leadership of the archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, in certain cases actually supported the demands of the popular organizations.³⁰ In both universities, following various massacres of students by the military from 1975 onwards, the guerrilla groups found a pool for recruitment upon which they could draw almost without limit.

At the same time, falling prices for coffee in the world market and a bad harvest in 1978 owing to climatic conditions, as well as a high rate of inflation, led to declining real wages for rural workers and a consequent rise in their combativity. By the late summer of 1978, the domestic political situation in El Salvador had developed into a permanent violent conflict between the extreme right (and its supporters among the agricultural population) and the popular organizations and guerrilla groups of the left. From September 1978 onwards, the USA, under the direct influence of the popular insurrection in neighbouring Nicaragua, sought once again to bring into play the moderate opposition forces and to compel the Romero government to democratic concessions. By now even the Salvadorian private sector, and its ANEP organization, were pressing Romero to make such concessions after resistance by FARN and continuing violent clashes had led to a hectic flight of capital (some 300 million dollars in 1978). The majority of

³⁰ On the divisions within the Church vis-à-vis the popular organizations, see T. R. Campos, 'La iglesia y las organizaciones populares en El Salvador', *Estudios Centro-americanos* 359, San Salvador, Sept. 1978, pp. 692-702.

foreign businesspeople had left the country. The Japanese business community, for example, declined from 2,400 to 200 individuals.

At the beginning of March 1979, Romero gave in, repealed the public order law and was immediately faced with strike action by sections of the urban working class, now dominated not by the moderate unions but by the revolutionary popular organizations. It was significant that these strikes included political action in solidarity with the demands of other striking workers.

The workers in the La Constancia and La Tropical bottling plants, a majority of whom were organized in the unions of the Bloque, and a minority in those of the FAPU, went on strike in support of thirty concrete economic and social demands. The army intervened. On 10 March violent clashes took place between demonstrators and the armed forces, with at least seven demonstrators being killed. During the following days, 24 other factories came out on strike in solidarity with the workers of La Constancia and La Tropical. On 19 March the power workers' union, its 1500 members belonging to FAPU, called a 23-hour sympathy strike, crippling industry and commerce. The power workers locked themselves in the power stations and threatened to blow these up if the military intervened. The armed forces and bosses admitted defeat. Twenty of the thirty demands of the bottling plant workers were conceded.

The right wing made a brutal reply. By the end of April, ORDEN had murdered more than fifty members of the Bloque in the countryside and in the slums. Also in March and April, more than 130 people vanished without trace. At the same time, the Carter administration stepped up its attempts to put together a bloc of the centre that could launch a democratic initiative. This bloc was to consist of the Christian Democrats, the De Sola family and a group of parliamentarians including the President of the National Assembly, Leonardo Echevarría. In February, Echevarría had already met Carter for a 'working breakfast'. The extreme right, for its part, lined up behind the Hill family (one of the fourteen families), and Colonel Eduardo Iraheta, and opted for a decisive violent destruction of the left. General Romero's decline now began.

At the beginning of May the Bloque occupied the embassies of Costa Rica and France, as well as the San Salvador cathedral, demanding the release of five of its leading members. A demonstration in front of the cathedral was fired on by the army. More than 20 demonstrators were killed on the steps of the church (some sources say 40). Archbishop Oscar Romero supported the demands of the Bloque. The Christian Democrat leader, Colonel Ernesto Claramount, living in exile in Costa Rica, called for a coup by the constitutionalist sectors of the army. General Romero, following diplomatic pressure from the USA, declared himself ready for a 'national dialogue' with the moderate opposition parties. The popular organizations, however, were to be excluded from this dialogue. On 22 May the military fired on a demonstration by the Bloque, killing 14 people. Altogether during that month, 188 people died in clashes of this kind.

While these clashes and the guerrilla war in the countryside continued throughout the summer, the USA succeeded in wresting from General Romero the concession that the moderate opposition politicians (Christian Democrats) could return from exile, while seeking to build up Napoleón Duarte as the leading figure of the moderate opposition. These attempts were also supported by Archbishop Oscar Romero, who increasingly distanced himself from the Bloque for its use of violence.³¹ The 'national dialogue' failed to take place, as General Romero did not accept the preconditions placed by the Christian Democrats and the MNR, demanding the disbanding of ORDEN and the UGB.

The Coup and the New Junta

The victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was seen by the popular organizations in El Salvador as proof that a dictatorship really could be overthrown by a determined population. In September the unrest in both town and country rapidly intensified, workers supporting the Bloque and the FAPU occupying four factories in San Salvador, and the popular organizations declared 1980 the year of liberation.

The increasing polarization and the failure of attempts at a 'national dialogue' left the moderate opposition forces only the solution that the Christian Democrat leaders had already called for in May. On 15 October 1979 a section of the army made a coup, overthrew Romero, disarmed all the officers who had held ministerial posts in Romero's government, dismissed the armed forces' ten generals and prematurely retired many higher and middle-ranking officers. The new junta and cabinet was an alliance between conservatives and left Christian Democrat and Social Democrat forces from the urban sector, intent on 'radical reforms' within the capitalist system. Not only were the extreme right excluded, so too were the popular organizations and those forces set on abolishing the capitalist system itself.

FAPU was represented by Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez (a junta member), a conservative, from a pro-US faction in the army, which has allowed the overtly fascist elements in the military, implicated in numerous crimes against the population, to go about unpunished. The Defence Minister, Colonel José García, belonged to this same faction. Colonel Adolfo Arnoldo Majano (a junta member) represented a group of young constitutionalist officers, who were suppressed in the army, but gained strength following the coup of 1972 and were held not to have 'compromised with imperialism'.³² Mario Andino (a junta member), head of the local Phelps Dodge subsidiary, represented that faction of the fourteen big bourgeois families led by the De Solas, who stood for a democratic initiative and agrarian reform, but could do nothing against the reactionary agrarian oligarchy. The new agriculture minister also belonged to this reform-oriented faction of the fourteen families. He was already minister of agriculture under Molina,

³¹ 'El Salvador: Midfield Manoeuvre', *Latin America Political Report*, London, 31 August 1979, p. 269.

³² FAPU, 'Posición de FAPU ante el golpe de estado del 15 de Octubre', Pueblo Internacional, *El Salvador*, No. 1979, pp. 1-8.

subsequently resigning when his land reform projects were rejected. Román Mayorga Quirós (a junta member), rector of the Catholic university UCA, represents a policy oriented towards Catholic social doctrine, pragmatically set on concrete measures to improve the situation of the lower strata of the population.³³ The education minister and the minister for planning also belong to this political tendency. Guillermo Ungo (a junta member) is head of the social-democratic MNRR, while the finance minister and the justice minister were both also close to the right wing of that party. The Christian Democrats provided the foreign minister and the minister-president. The economic ministry was given to a bourgeois technocrat; the ministry of labour to a leading member of the Communist Party.

This composition makes clear that the new government essentially aimed at an effective market economy with a strong social component. The junta proclaimed its intention to guarantee freedom of political and trade-union organization without ideological discrimination, as well as freedom of speech, press and assembly. In the junta's programme, the prevailing economic and social structures were said to pose obstacles to the country's development. Above all, a basic agrarian reform and a reform of the financial system were promised. On the other hand, the programme guaranteed private property in its 'social function'.

Despite this declaration of intent, the junta immediately proclaimed a state of emergency and banned meetings of more than three people. Security forces raided four of the occupied factories and arrested more than 70 workers. The popular organizations accordingly viewed the junta as simply a new form of the familiar Salvadorian military dictatorship, and called for a new popular uprising. This insurrection, however, failed to materialize. By the end of October, several clashes had taken place between demonstrators and security forces, in which more than 100 demonstrators were shot. The junta declared that both the arrest of workers and the murder of demonstrators were the acts of groups in the security forces that were not under its control.³³ In the second week of November, 60 members of the National Guard were discharged, 12 being brought before the courts. After the Bloque had occupied the economic and labour ministries for some two weeks, the junta agreed in principle to the Bloque's demands for higher wages, lower basic food prices, a freeze on bus fares, freedom for political prisoners, the dissolution of ORDEN and a settlement to several labour disputes.³⁴

After subsequent dialogues between the popular organizations and the junta, arranged via the Sandinistas, the popular organizations confined their agitation to concrete demands. The Bloque's spokesperson, Juan Chacón, declared: 'This is the first Salvadorian government that recognizes the justice of our demands.'

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ On events up to the beginning of November, see FARU, 'Acontecimientos mas sobresalientes desde el golpe de estado en El Salvador', *Pueblo Internacional*, Nov. 1979, pp. 14-20.

The Collapse of the Junta and the Turn Towards Civil War

The bourgeois-military junta and its cabinet were in fact a combination of forces whose social base lay only in a minority of the Salvadorian population. To the left, there stood the revolutionary popular organizations with their strong support among the rural workers, sections of the small peasants, industrial workers, marginal population, students and the lower ranks of the clergy. To the extent that the transformation of the rural economy, as depicted above, expelled ever larger sections of the rural population even from the transitional forms between independent work and wage-labour, turning them into pure agricultural wage-labourers, the socio-economic basis of the split in the agricultural population disappeared and the revolutionary left tended to gain growing influence in the countryside. To the right of the junta, there were the members of ORDEN (even if this organization was formally disbanded), which still had considerable influence among the small peasants and marginal population, and among those who saw themselves faced with the loss of a relative privilege in poverty by the junta's reform policy; groups whose social base (the socio-economic fragmentation of the agricultural population) was becoming ever more narrow—a fact that only intensified their violent readiness for self-defence. Also on the extreme right were to be found the great majority of the bourgeoisie, of the fourteen great families and of the senior military commanders. In the middle stood the government, supported by the reform-oriented urban middle strata, by a small minority of the bourgeoisie proper, by sections of the industrial working class and the army, and the majority of the higher clergy. And this government of the centre was itself split into numerous fractions, which Lilian Jimenez of the Communist Party saw as stretching from Communist through fascistoid officers,³⁵ and which can be divided into two major blocs: on the one hand the bloc of the bourgeoisie and military, for whom the intended reforms were only an extreme measure for de-escalating the domestic political situation, and who therefore sought to restrict the reforms to those necessary for this end; on the other hand the young constitutionalist officers, the intellectuals and the politicians of the traditional urban opposition parties, for whom these reforms were only the first step in a series of far-reaching structural measures. This internally divided government was forced by the pressure of the revolutionary popular organizations, as well as by its own supporters among the urban population, to a reform policy that had to be pursued against a right wing prepared to oppose it by all possible means.

Faced with this situation, the government's internal unity inevitably collapsed, with the two blocs pulling increasingly apart. From last November, all proposed reforms were wrecked in the same way. The junta declared a reform measure. The business associations prevented its practical execution and frequently found support for this in the right-wing bloc within the government. This right-wing bloc was led by the defence minister José Guillermo García and included the junta members Colonel Abdul Gutiérrez and Mario Andino. Workers

³⁵ *Humanité*, Paris, 26 December 1979.

under the leadership of the popular organizations then sought to compel the reform by mass struggle. The extreme right-wing fraction of the armed forces and police brutally repressed the workers, either with support from the right-wing bloc within the government, or in flagrant contravention of the junta's instructions. By the end of 1979, 350 people had been killed by the armed forces since the junta took power. The conflict that led to the collapse of the government also proceeded in the same way. The left demanded wage increases for the coffee workers. In the first half of December, the junta accepted this demand and decreed an increase. The coffee planters ignored the decree. Agricultural workers went on strike and occupied the plantations. Sections of the armed forces evicted the workers with the most brutal violence—not on government orders, but with cover from the right wing in the junta and cabinet. Forty workers were murdered on one farm alone, 'El Refugio'. In this way, the junta and cabinet lost more and more power to the commanders of the armed forces and the right-wing bloc.

At the end of December nine civilian ministers demanded that the junta take a clear position against the terror campaign abetted by the extreme right wing in the military. They also demanded the resignation of the defence minister and Mario Andino. They demanded, too, that the leadership of the armed forces accept democratization—otherwise they would themselves resign. In the beginning of January the left-wing civilian junta members Róman Mayorga Quirós and Guillermo Ungo stepped down, leaving the big bourgeois Mario Andino as the only remaining civilian. The entire cabinet resigned as well, with the sole exception of the defence minister. The right-wing bloc had won the day, and any reformist solution to El Salvador's problems was now impossible. The officers could only find a right-wing fraction of the Christian Democrats to collaborate with them in a new government.

The year 1980, proclaimed by the popular organizations as the 'year of liberation', began with the preparation of civil war. The popular organizations and guerrilla groups on the one hand, ORDEN and the business associations on the other, stepped up their efforts to arm their supporters. The traditional parties of the urban opposition and the trade unions overwhelmingly came down on the side of the popular organizations. The clandestine Communist Party made known its agreement with the FLP and FARN guerrillas. The three popular organizations and the UDN established coordinating organs at the local and national levels with the aim of achieving the unity of the left. This revolutionary bloc has been working since the middle of January to establish a 'Unidad Popular' that would encompass the more progressive sections of the army (loosely organized around the young constitutionalist officers) as well as the traditional urban opposition parties, groups and trade unions. By the end of the month, the university intellectuals of UCA, the MNR and sections of the Catholic clergy under the leadership of Archbishop Romero declared themselves ready to support this Unidad Popular.³⁶ A further section of the clergy,

³⁶ Even the youth organization of the Christian-Democrats, which has condemned the participation of their party in the government, appears to have taken a cautiously positive position towards the Unidad Popular.

under the leadership of Bishop Pedro Aparicio, declared a crusade against communism. Rank-and-file priests and monks, for their part, joined the revolutionary organizations by the hundreds.

A deep split also developed within the armed forces. A crucial role in the coup of 15 October 1979 had been played by the 'Juventud Militar' group of young constitutionalist officers. This movement can be seen as the successor to the reform-oriented wing of the armed forces of the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In 1968-69 Colonel Adolfo Majano had established a training programme in the military academy designed to familiarize competent officers with socio-political problems, so as to form a military cadre able to deploy instruments of social and economic policy, as well as weapons, in dealing with their country's problems. The socio-economic situation rapidly brought home to the officers who experienced this programme that El Salvador's problems could only be mastered by radical structural changes. Juventud Militar thus envisaged not only political democratization, in accordance with the Salvadorian constitution,³⁷ but also the nationalization of foreign trade and the banks, and agrarian reform to promote national economic development.

With this ideological development, Juventud Militar gradually eroded the prevailing consensus between the extreme right wing of the military and the moderate reform wing. Even though these two factions had taken turns in overthrowing one another over the previous four decades, neither had ever sought the other's total elimination. Juventud Militar, however, was repressed as far as possible under the Molina and Romero governments. It sought in turn, after the coup of 15 October 1979, to neutralize the right-wing senior officers by setting up soldiers' councils designed to invigilate recalcitrant commanders. It seems that this experiment backfired in several military zones and strengthened the hand of the Defence Minister, José García who emerged as the most powerful member of the junta. In early March the Government announced sweeping measures nationalizing the banks and effecting an agrarian reform. The assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero appears to have been a calculated rightist provocation, aimed at exacerbating tension as well as eliminating an influential opponent. In early May Majano attempted to arrest one of the commanders of the paramilitary forces linked to García, Roberto D'Aubuisson. This attempt met strong resistance within the military hierarchy. García dismissed Majano from his post and appointed Jaime Abdul Guiterrez as sole Army commander. This marked the eclipse of the 'pro-constitutionalist' faction and the imposition of ultra-rightist hegemony within the junta. The US Ambassador, Robert White, was said to have played a 'mediating role' in these events.³⁸

³⁷ The constitutionalist goal inspired the coup of 1972, even though this proved unsuccessful.

³⁸ *Latin America Weekly Report* (London), 28 March, 18 April, 9 May, 16 May and 28 June; see also the *Economist*, 18 June, which candidly assesses the alignment of the Carter administration with the military regime. Already in late January the following report appeared in a German paper: 'It is gathered from political and diplomatic circles in El Salvador that Washington is prepared to give support of any kind, including American troops, if the new junta should prove in danger of overthrow by the united left.' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 29, 1980.

Meanwhile the military and para-military forces pressed ahead with their version of the agrarian reform. This entailed not only renewed offensives in the countryside but also a division of some large estates in the interests of the leaders and supporters of ORDEN. In this way the rightists have found a way to exploit the reform programme for their own ends, sacrificing the interests only of weaker, or more liberal-minded, land-owners. The junta continues to represent a section of the Christian Democrats and to enjoy the support, or toleration, of the bulk of the bourgeoisie. So long as there is no open split in the armed forces the position of the Salvadorean junta remains much stronger than that of Somoza's regime in 1978-9 since the latter had, by this time, lost any significant social base. Despite the evident rightist domination of the junta it continues to receive US support; recently the Salvadorean armed forces have received six US made helicopter gunships. It has also been announced that there will be joint operations between the Salvadorean, Guatemalan and Honduran armed forces aimed at containing the guerrilla threat.

At the time of writing (early July) it seems that a ferociously repressive regime, enjoying significant sectional support and able to draw on unstinting foreign aid, is aiming to smash the guerrillas and the popular organizations which support them. In late June Honduran priests testified that six hundred people had been slaughtered by the military at a border village as they sought to escape from the wave of repression. The coordinating committee of the revolutionary forces now claims that there are some 15,000 guerrillas, backed up by some 200,000 lightly armed civilian militia organized by trade unions and civic associations. However they suffer from an acute shortage of weapons and only formed a unified operational command in late June.³⁹ Within the united front opposed to the junta the strength of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist organizations is generally much stronger than that of the former reformist organizations. But the radicalism and depth of the popular opposition to the regime do not make the latter any less formidable. The prospects, are for an even more bitter and protracted struggle in El Salvador than in Nicaragua, with the stakes starkly defined as savage military rule versus socialist revolution.

³⁹ *Intercontinental Press-Inprecor*, July 7 1980. On June 25 it was announced that a Revolutionary Military Coordinating Committee had been formed made up of one representative from each of the four main armed revolutionary organizations: FLP, ERP-PRS, FAR and the Communist Party. At the same time it was announced that a united Political Directorate had been formed made up of one representative from each of five organizations: Revolutionary People's Bloc (RPA) February 28 People's Leagues (LP-28), United People's Action Front (UPAF); Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN, linked to the Communist Party), and People's Liberation Movement (MLP).

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and even supra-class support; and (3) whether to seek improvements, reforms, within the confines of capitalism or to dedicate all efforts and energies to its complete transformation.

Social democrats choose to participate, to seek supra-class alliances, and to struggle for reforms. Yet these decisions are not independent of each other. What is crucial to understand is the development of social democracy as a process: the manner in which the response to any one of these alternatives opens and closes the subsequent choices. For it may be that any movement that chooses to participate in bourgeois institutions, and specifically in elections, must seek support for socialist transformation beyond the working class and must struggle for all improvements that are possible in the short run without regard for ultimate consequences. Are the decisions to participate and the strategy of supra-class appeal inextricably connected? Is the orientation toward immediate reforms a necessary consequence of broadening the class base? Is an electoral party that would be based exclusively on working class support and dedicated exclusively to ultimate goals even possible? These are the kinds of questions that need to be answered if we are to draw lessons from the social democratic experience. What we need to know is the logic of choices faced by any movement for socialism within capitalist society: the historical possibilities that are opened and closed as each choice is made.

The Decision to Participate

The reason why involvement in bourgeois politics has never ceased to evoke controversy is that the very act of 'taking part' in this system shapes the movement for socialism and its relation to workers as a class. The recurrent question is whether involvement in bourgeois institutions can result in socialism, or must strengthen the capitalist order. Is it possible for the socialist movement to find a passage between the 'two reefs' charted by Rosa Luxemburg: 'abandonment of the mass character or abandonment of the final goals'?¹ Participation in electoral politics is necessary if the movement for socialism is to find mass support among workers, yet this participation seems to obstruct the attainment of final goals. Working for today and working toward tomorrow appear as contrasting horns of a dilemma.

Participation imprints a particular structure upon the organization of workers as a class. These effects of participation upon internal class relations have been best analysed by Luxemburg: 'the division between political struggle and economic struggle and their separation is but an artificial product, even if historically understandable, of the parliamentary period. On the one hand, in the peaceful development, "normal" for the bourgeois society, the economic struggle is fractionalized, disaggregated into a multitude of partial struggles limited to each firm, to each branch of production. On the other hand, the political struggle is conducted not by the masses through direct action, but, in conformity with the structure of the bourgeois state, in the

¹ Dick Howard, 'Re-reading Rosa Luxemburg', *Telos*, 18, Winter 1973-4, pp. 89-107.

representative fashion, by the pressure exercised upon the legislative body.²

The first effect of 'the structure of bourgeois state' is thus that wage-earners are formed as a class in a number of independent and often competitive organizations, most frequently as trade-unions and political parties, but also as cooperatives, neighbourhood associations, clubs, etc. One characteristic feature of capitalist democracy is the individualization of class relations at the level of politics and ideology.³ People who are capitalists or wage-earners within the system of production all appear in politics as undifferentiated 'individuals' or 'citizens'. Hence, even if a political party succeeds in forming a class on the terrain of political institutions, economic and political organizations never coincide. A multiplicity of unions and parties represent different interests and compete with each other. Moreover, while the class base of unions is confined to those who are more or less permanently employed, political parties which organize wage-earners must also mobilize people who are not members of unions. Hence there is a permanent tension between the narrower interests of unions and the broader interests represented by parties.⁴

The second effect is that relations within the class become structured as relations of representation. Parliament is a representative institution: it seats individuals, not masses. A relation of representation is thus imposed upon the class by the very nature of capitalist democratic institutions. Masses do not act directly in defence of their interests; they delegate this defence. This is true of unions as much as of parties: the process of collective bargaining is as distant from the daily experience of the masses as elections. Leaders become representatives. Masses represented by leaders: this is the mode of organization of the working class within capitalist institutions. In this manner participation demobilizes the masses.

The organizational dilemma extends even further. The struggle for socialism inevitably results in the *embourgeoisement* of the socialist movement: this is the gist of Robert Michels' classical analysis. The struggle requires organization; it demands a permanent apparatus, a salaried bureaucracy; it calls for the movement to engage in economic activities of its own. Hence socialist militants inevitably become bureaucrats, newspaper editors, managers of insurance companies, directors of funeral parlours, and even *Parteidniger*—party bar keepers. All of these are petty bourgeois occupations. 'They impress,' Michels concluded, '... a markedly petty bourgeois stamp.'⁵ As a French dissident wrote recently, 'The working class is lost in administering its imaginary bastions. Comrades disguised as notables occupy themselves with municipal garbage dumps and school cafeterias. Or are these notables disguised as comrades? I no longer know.'⁶

² Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions', in M. A. Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York 1970, p. 202.

³ Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London 1971, pp. 65–6; Nicolas Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, NLB London 1973.

⁴ Cf. Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, London 1977, p. 129.

⁵ Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, New York 1962, p. 270.

⁶ Guy Kooopnik, *Vive le centenaire des PCF*, Paris 1979, p. 53.

A party that participates in elections must forsake some alternative tactics: this is the frequently diagnosed tactical dilemma. As long as workers did not have full political rights, no choice between insurrectionary and parliamentary tactics was necessary. Indeed, political rights could be conquered by those who did not have them only through extraparlimentary activities. César de Paepe, the founder of the Parti Socialiste Brabançon, wrote in 1877 that 'in using our constitutional right and legal means at our disposal we do not renounce the right to revolution'.⁷ This statement was echoed frequently, notably by Engels in 1895. Alex Danielsson, a Swedish left-wing socialist, maintained in a more pragmatic vein that Social Democrats should not commit themselves to 'a dogma regarding tactics that would bind the party to act according to the same routine under all circumstances'.⁸ That the mass strike should be used to achieve universal (and that meant male) suffrage was not questioned, and both the Belgian and Swedish parties led successful mass strikes that resulted in extensions of suffrage.

Yet as soon as universal suffrage was obtained, the choice between the 'legal' and the 'extra-parliamentary' tactics had to be made. J. McGurk, the Chairman of the Labour Party, put it sharply in 1919: 'We are either constitutionalists or we are not constitutionalists. If we are constitutionalists, if we believe in the efficacy of the political weapon (and we do, or why do we have a Labour Party?) then it is both unwise and undemocratic because we fail to get a majority at the polls to turn around and demand that we should substitute industrial action.'⁹ The turning point in the tactics of several parties occurred after the failures of general strikes organized around economic issues. While strikes oriented toward suffrage had been generally successful, the use of mass strikes for economic goals resulted in political disasters in Belgium in 1902,¹⁰ Sweden in 1909,¹¹ France in 1920,¹² Norway in 1921,¹³ and Great Britain in 1926.¹⁴ All these strikes were defeated; in the aftermath trade-union membership was decimated and repressive legislation was passed. These common experiences of defeat and repression directed socialist parties toward an almost exclusive reliance on electoral tactics. Electoral participation was necessary to protect the movement from repression: this was the lesson drawn by socialist leaders. As Kautsky wrote already in 1891, 'The economic struggle demands political rights and these will not fall from heaven.'¹⁵

To win votes of people other than workers, particularly the petty bourgeoisie, to form alliances and coalitions, to administer the government in the interest of workers, a party cannot appear to be 'irrespon-

⁷ Carl Landauer, *European Socialism*, I, Berkeley 1959, p. 457.

⁸ Herbert Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, Totowa 1973, p. 362.

⁹ Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, London 1975, p. 69.

¹⁰ Landauer, *European Socialism*, I, pp. 472-3.

¹¹ Berndt Schiller, 'Years of Crisis, 1906-14', in Steven Koblick (ed.), *Sweden's Development from Poverty to Affluence, 1750-1970*, Minneapolis 1975, pp. 208-217.

¹² Charles S. Maier, *Rising Bourgeois Europe*, Princeton 1975, p. 158.

¹³ William A. Lafferty, *Economic Development and the Response of Labor in Scandinavia*, Oslo 1971, p. 191.

¹⁴ Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, p. 148.

¹⁵ Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, New York 1971, p. 186.

sible', to give any indication of being less than whole-hearted about its commitment to the rules and the limits of the parliamentary game. At times the party must even restrain its own followers from actions that would jeopardize electoral progress. Moreover, a party oriented toward partial improvements, a party in which leader-representatives lead a petty bourgeois life style, a party that for years has shied away from the streets cannot 'pour through the hole in the trenches', as Gramsci put it, even when this opening is forged by a crisis. 'The trouble about the revolutionary left in stable industrial societies,' observed Eric Hobsbawm, 'is not that its opportunities never came, but that the normal conditions in which it must operate prevent it from developing the movements likely to seize the rare moments when they are called upon to behave as revolutionaries. . . . Being a revolutionary in countries such as ours just happens to be difficult.'¹⁶

This dilemma became even more acute when democracy—representative democracy characteristic of bourgeois society—ceased to be merely a tactic and was embraced as the basic tenet of the future socialist society. Social democratic parties recognized in political democracy a value that transcends different forms of organization of production. Jean Jaurès claimed that: 'The triumph of socialism will not be a break with the French Revolution but the fulfillment of the French Revolution in new economic conditions.'¹⁷ Eduard Bernstein saw in socialism simply 'democracy brought to its logical conclusion',¹⁸ and ever since then the recurrent theme of social democracy has been precisely the notion of 'extending' the democratic principle from the political to the social, in effect principally economic, realm. Representative democracy became for social democrats simultaneously the means and the goal, the vehicle for socialism and the political form of the future socialist society, simultaneously the strategy and the programme, instrumental and prefigurative.¹⁹

This commitment made, however, even more crucial the question whether, as Harold Laski put it, capitalist democracy will 'allow its electorate to stumble into socialism by the accident of the verdict at the polls'.²⁰ The most important reservation toward an exclusive commitment to electoralism stemmed from the tenuous nature of bourgeois legality. Little is to be gained by interpreting and reinterpreting every word Marx wrote about bourgeois democracy for the simple reason that Marx himself, and the people who led the newly founded parties into electoral battles, were not quite certain what to expect of electoral competition. The main question—one which history never resolved because it cannot be resolved once and for all—was whether the bourgeoisie would respect its own legal order in case of an electoral triumph of socialism. If socialists were to use the institution of

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries*, New York and London 1973, pp. 14–15.

¹⁷ Jean Jaurès, *L'esprit du socialisme*, Paris 1971, p. 71.

¹⁸ Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, New York 1961.

¹⁹ For the views of Kautsky and Luxemburg, who were somewhat more cautious, see Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880–1938*, NLB London 1979 and Norman Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, NLB London 1976.

²⁰ Harold Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, Chapell Hill 1935, p. 77.

suffrage—established by the bourgeoisie in its struggle against absolutism—to win elections and to legislate a society toward socialism, would the bourgeoisie revert to illegal means to defend its interests? This is what happened in France in 1851, and it seemed likely that it would happen again. But on several occasions Marx entertained the possibility that in England or in Holland counter-revolution would not occur if workers won the majority in the parliament. Thus, the essential question facing socialist parties was whether, as Hjalmar Branting posed it in 1886, 'the upper class [would] respect popular will *even when it demanded the abolition of its own privileges*'.²¹ Sterky, the leader of the left wing of the Swedish party, was among those who took a clearly negative view: 'Suppose that . . . the working class could send a majority to the legislature; not even by doing this would it obtain power. One can be sure that the capitalist class would then take care not to continue along a parliamentary course but would instead resort to bayonets.'²² This was eventually the position defended by Luxemburg in 1900.²³ No one could be completely certain: according to Salvadori, Kautsky wobbled each time he approached this question.²⁴ Austrian Socialists promised in their Linz programme of 1926 to 'govern in strict accordance with the rules of the democratic state', but they still felt compelled to warn that 'should the bourgeoisie by boycotting revolutionary forces attempt to obstruct the social change which the labour movement in assuming power is pledged to carry out, then social democracy will be forced to employ dictatorial means to break such resistance.'²⁵ The main doubt about electoral participation was whether revolution would not be necessary in any case, as August Bebel put it in 1905, as 'as a purely defensive measure, designed to safeguard the exercise of power legitimately acquired through the ballot.'²⁶ Dictatorship of the proletariat, and revolutionary violence, might be necessary even if the party adhered strictly to its electoral commitment. Tactical dualism could not be easily foreseen.²⁷

Hence social democrats faced a dilemma, dramatized by Gay in his biography of Bernstein. 'Is democratic socialism, then, impossible? Or can it be achieved only if the party is willing to abandon the democratic method temporarily to attain power by violence in the hope that it may return to parliamentarism as soon as control is secure. Surely this second alternative contains tragic possibilities: a democratic movement that resorts to authoritarian methods to gain its objective may not remain a democratic movement for long. Still, the first alternative—to cling to democratic procedures under all circumstances—may doom the party to continual political impotence.'²⁸

²¹ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 361.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, New York 1970, p. 28.

²⁴ Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution*, pp. 66 and 80.

²⁵ Norbert Leor, 'Austro-Marxism: A Reappraisal', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11, 1976, pp. 133-48, p. 145.

²⁶ Carl E. Shorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917*, New York 1955, p. 43.

²⁷ Cf. Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*.

²⁸ Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, New York 1970, p. 7.

Social Democracy's Forward March

In spite of all the ambivalence, in spite of the pressure of short-term preoccupations, socialists entered into bourgeois politics to win elections, to obtain an overwhelming mandate for revolutionary transformations, and to legislate the society into socialism. This was their aim and this was their expectation.

Electoral participation was based on the belief that democracy is not only necessary but that it is sufficient for reaching socialism. 'If one thing is certain,' Engels wrote in 1891 (a letter that was to meet with Lenin's acute displeasure), 'it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of democratic republic. This is even the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.'²⁹ Jaurès saw in democracy 'the largest and most solid terrain on which the working class can stand . . . the bedrock that the reactionary bourgeoisie cannot dissolve without opening fissures in the earth and throwing itself into them'.³⁰ Millerand was, as always, most incisive: 'To realize the immediate reforms capable of relieving the lot of the working class, and thus fitting it to win its own freedom, and to begin, as conditioned by the nature of things, the socialization of the means of production, it is necessary and sufficient for the socialist party to endeavour to capture the government through universal suffrage.'³¹

Socialists entered elections because they were concerned about immediate improvements of workers' conditions. Yet they also entered in order to bring about socialism. Was this divergence between cause and purpose a symptom of rationalization? Was the pathos of final goals just a form of self-deception?

Such questions are best left for psychologists to resolve. But one thing is certain. Those who led socialist parties into electoral battles believed that dominant classes can be 'beaten at their own game'. Socialists were deeply persuaded that they would win election, that they would obtain for socialism the support of an overwhelming numerical majority. They put all of their hopes and their efforts into electoral competition because they were certain that electoral victory was within reach. Their strength was in numbers, and elections are an expression of numerical strength. Hence, universal suffrage seemed to guarantee socialist victory, if not immediately then certainly within the near future. Revolution would be made at the ballot box. Among the many expressions of this conviction is the striking apologia delivered by Engels in 1895: 'The German workers . . . showed the comrades in all countries how to make use of universal suffrage. . . . With the successful utilization of universal suffrage . . . an entirely new method of proletarian struggle came into operation, and this method quickly developed even further. It was found that state institutions, in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, offer the working class still further

²⁹ Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, *Correspondence 1846-95*, Moscow 1935, p. 486.

³⁰ Lealie Derfler, *Socialism since Marx: A Century of the European Left*, New York 1973, p. 59.

³¹ R. C. K. Ennor, *Modern Socialism as Set Forth by the Socialists in their Speeches, Writings and Programs*, New York 1908, p. 54.

opportunities to fight these very state institutions.' And Engels offered a forecast: 'If it [electoral progress] continues in this fashion, by the end of the century we shall . . . grow into the decisive power in the land, before which all other powers will have to bow, whether they like it or not.'³²

The grounds for this conviction were both theoretical and practical. Already in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels described socialism as the movement of 'the immense majority'.³³ In an 1850 article on 'The Chartists' in the New York *Daily Tribune* and then again in 1867 in the Polish emigre newspaper *Głos Wolny*, Marx repeated that 'universal suffrage is the equivalent of political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population. . .'.³⁴ Kautsky's *The Class Struggle*, probably the most influential theoretical statement of the early socialist movement, maintained that the proletariat already constituted the largest class 'in all civilized countries'.³⁵ And even if the first electoral battles would not end in triumph, even if the proletariat was not yet the majority, electoral victory seemed only a matter of time because capitalism was swelling the ranks of the proletarians. The development of factory production and its corollary concentration of capital and land were leading rapidly to proletarianization of craftsmen, artisans, merchants, and small agricultural proprietors. Even 'the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science' were being converted into proletarians, according to *The Communist Manifesto*. This growth of the number of people who sold their labour power for a wage was not accidental, temporary, or reversible: it was viewed as a necessary feature of capitalist development. Hence, it was just a question of time before almost everyone, 'all but a handful of exploiters', would become proletarians. Socialism would be in the interest of almost everyone, and the overwhelming majority of the people would electorally express their will for socialism. A young Swedish theoretician formulated this syllogism as follows in 1919: 'The struggle for the state is political. Its outcome is therefore to a very great extent contingent upon the possibility open to society's members—whose proletarianism has been brought about by the capitalist process—to exercise their proper influence on political decision-making. If democracy is achieved, the growth of capitalism means a corresponding mobilization of voices *against* the capitalist system itself. Democracy therefore contains an automatically operative device that heightens the opposition to capitalism in proportion to the development of capitalism.'³⁶

Indeed, while those who eventually became communists saw in the Russian Revolution the proof that successful insurrection is always possible, for social democrats the necessity to rely on an insurrection

³² Frederick Engels, 'Introduction (1895) to Karl Marx', *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-50*, Moscow 1960, p. 22.

³³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', *The Revolutions of 1848*, Penguin/NLR Marx Library, London 1976.

³⁴ Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, Penguin/NLR Marx Library, London 1976.

³⁵ Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, p. 43.

³⁶ Tingssten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 402.

of a minority meant only that conditions for socialism were not yet mature.³⁷ While Branting, for example, shared Gramsci's first reaction to the October Revolution³⁸ when he maintained that 'the whole developmental idea of socialism is discarded in Bolshevism', he drew precisely the conclusion that socialists should wait until conditions ripen to the point that an overwhelming majority of the people would electorally express their will for socialist transformations.³⁹ Since they were thoroughly persuaded that such conditions would be brought about by the development of capitalism, social democrats were not chagrined by electoral reversals, which were interpreted only to mean that the point had not yet arrived. Even when they had to relinquish control over the government, social democrats were not tempted to hasten the course of history. History spoke through the people, who spoke in elections, and no one doubted that history would make people express their will for socialism.

These expectations, based on the conviction about the future course of history, were almost immediately vindicated by the electoral progress of socialist parties. The German party—posed by Engels as the model to be followed—despite years of depression grew from 125,000 votes in 1871 to 312,000 in 1881, 1,427,000 in 1890, to 4,250,400 on the eve of World War I. Indeed, as soon as the Anti-Socialist laws were allowed to lapse, the SPD became in 1890 the largest party in Germany with 19.7 per cent of the vote. By 1912 their share of 34.8 per cent was more than twice that of the next largest party. No wonder that Bebel in 1905 could make 'explicit the widely held assumption of his fellow socialists that the working class would continue to grow and that the party would one day embrace a majority of the population. . . .'⁴⁰ Several parties entered even more spectacularly into the competition for votes. In 1907, Finnish Social Democrats won the plurality, 37 per cent, in the first election under universal suffrage. The Austrian Social Democrats won 21.0 per cent after male franchise was made universal in 1907, 25.4 per cent in 1911, and the plurality of 40.8 per cent in 1919. The Belgian Parti Ouvrier won 13.2 per cent when the regime censitaire was abolished in 1894 and kept growing in jumps to win in 1925 the plurality of 39.4 per cent, a success which 'stimulated them to hope that continuing industrialization would produce an increasing socialist working-class electorate'.⁴¹ Even in those countries where the first steps were not equally dramatic, electoral progress seemed inexorable. In the religiously politicized Netherlands, socialism marched in big steps, from 3 per cent of the total vote in 1896 to 9.5 per cent, 11.2 per cent, 13.9 per cent and 18.5 per cent in 1913. The Danish party obtained 4.9 per cent in 1884, the first election it contested, only 3.5 per cent in 1889; from this moment on the party never failed to increase the share of the vote until 1935 when it won 46.1

³⁷ Kautsky, *Terrorism and communism*, Paris 1919.

³⁸ Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*, NLB London 1973, p. 112.

³⁹ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 405.

⁴⁰ Shorake, *German Social Democracy*, p. 43.

⁴¹ Xavier Mabille and Val R. Lorwin, 'The Belgian Socialist Party', in William E. Paterson and Alastair H. Thomas (eds.), *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, London 1977, p. 392.

per cent. There again, 'there was a general expectation that as the sole party representing the labour movement, it would achieve power through an absolute majority of the electorate'.⁴² The Swedish party began meekly, offering candidates on joint lists with Liberals, it won 3.5 per cent in 1902, 9.5 per cent in 1905, 14.6 per cent in 1908, jumped to 28.5 per cent in 1911 after suffrage was extended, increased its share to 30.1 per cent and 36.4 per cent in the two successive elections of 1914, and together with its left-wing off-shoot won the plurality of the vote, 39.1 per cent in 1917. The Norwegian Labour Party grew about 5 per cent in each election from 1897 when it obtained 0.6 per cent onward to 1915 when its share reached 32.1 per cent.

Practice was confirming the theory. From election to election the forces of socialism were growing in strength. Each round was a new success. From a few thousand, at best, during the first difficult moments, socialists saw their electorate extend into millions. The progress seemed inexorable; the majority, and the mandate for socialism embodied therein, were only a matter of a few years, a couple of elections away. One more effort and humanity would be ushered into a new era by the overwhelming expression of popular will. 'I am convinced,' Bebel spoke at the Erfurt Congress, 'that the fulfillment of our aims is so close that there are few in this hall who will not live to see the day.'⁴³

Social Democracy and the Working Class

The Socialist party was to be the working class organized. As Bergounioux and Manin observed, 'workers' autonomy outside politics or a political emancipation that would not be specifically workers', such were the two tendencies at the moment when Marx and Engels contributed to the founding of the International Workingmen's Association'.⁴⁴ Marx's decisive influence was a synthesis of these two positions: socialism as a movement of the working class in politics. The orientation Marx advocated was new: to organize a 'party' but one that would be distinctly of workers, independent from and opposed to all other classes. The organization of workers 'into a class, and consequently into a political party'⁴⁵ was necessary for workers to conquer political power and, in Marx's view, it should not and would not affect the autonomy of the working class as a political force. 'The emancipation of the working class should be,' in the celebrated phrase, 'the task of the working class itself.'

We know why Marx expected workers to become the moving force for socialism: by virtue of their position within the capitalist society, workers were simultaneously the class that was exploited in the specifically capitalist manner and the only class that had the capacity to organize production on its own once capitalist relations were

⁴² Paterson and Thomas, *Social Democratic Parties*, p. 240.

⁴³ Derfler, *Socialism since Marx*, p. 58.

⁴⁴ Alain Bergounioux and Bernard Manin, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis*, Paris 1979, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, 'Communist Manifesto', *The Revolutions of 1848*.

abolished.⁴⁶ Yet this emphasis on the 'organic relation between socialism and the working class—the relation conceived of as one between the historical mission and the historical agent—does not explain by itself why socialists sought during the initial period to organize only workers and all the workers. The reasons for this privileged relation between socialist parties and the working class were more immediate and more practical than those that could be found in Marx's theory of history.

First, capitalism is a system in which workers compete with each other unless they are organized as a class. Similarity of class position does not necessarily result in solidarity since the interests which workers share are precisely those which put them in competition with one another, primarily as they bid down wages in quest of employment. Class interest is something attached to workers as a collectivity rather than as a collection of individuals, their 'group' rather than 'serial' interest.⁴⁷ A general increase of wages is in the interest of all workers, but it does not affect relations among them. Alternatively, a law establishing a minimal level of wages, extending compulsory education, advancing the age of retirement, or limiting working hours affects the relations among workers without being necessarily in the interest of each of them. Indeed, some workers would prefer to work beyond their normal retirement age even if they were excluding other workers from work; some people who do not find employment would be willing to be hired for less than the minimal wage even if it lowered the general level of wages; some would be willing to fulfill their historical mission of emancipating the entire society. In his *Address to the Communist League* in 1850 Marx emphasized that workers 'must themselves do the utmost for their final victory by clarifying their minds as to what their class interests are, by taking their position as an independent party as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves to be seduced for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into refraining from the independent organization of the party of the proletariat.'⁴⁸ Rosenberg reports the tendency of German socialism in the 1860s to 'isolate itself and to emphasize these qualities that differentiated it from all the groups and tendencies of the wealthy classes. At this stage the radical proletarian movement tended particularly to see the nobility and the peasants, the manufacturers and the intellectuals as "a uniform reactionary mass".'⁴⁹ The same was true of the first labour candidates who competed in the Paris election of 1863.⁵⁰ The notion of 'one single reactionary mass' underlied the Gotha Programme of 1875 and reappeared in the Swedish programme of 1889.⁵¹ Still in 1891, when Engels was asked to comment on Kautsky's draft of the Erfurt Programme, he objected to a reference to 'the people in general' by asking 'who is that?'⁵² And with his

⁴⁶ Ernest Mandel, *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx*, New York and London 1972, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, NLB London 1976.

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, 'Address to the Communist League', *The Revolutions of 1848*.

⁴⁹ Arthur Rosenberg, *Democracy and Socialism*, Boston 1965, p. 161.

⁵⁰ Rosenberg, *Democracy and Socialism*, p. 165.

⁵¹ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 367.

⁵² Frederick Engels, *A Contribution to the Critique of the Social Democratic Draft Programme of 1891*, Moscow n.d., p. 56.

typical eloquence, Jules Guesde argued in Lille in 1890: 'The Revolution which is incumbent upon you is possible only to the extent that you will remain yourselves, class against class, not knowing and not wanting to know the divisions that may exist in the capitalist world.'⁵³

Indeed, the initial difficulty which socialists faced was that workers were distrustful of any influences originating outside their class. Socialism seemed an abstract and an alien ideology in relation to daily experience. It was not apparent to workers that an improvement of their conditions required that the very system of wage labour must be abolished. Bergounioux and Manin report that according to a study of French workers at the beginning of the Third Republic there was a resistance among workers to the socialist message, an emphasis on the direct conflict between workers and employers, and a neglect of politics.⁵⁴ In Belgium, a party bearing a socialist label, *Parti socialiste belge*, was founded in 1879 but had difficulty persuading workers' associations to affiliate. According to Landauer workers were mistrustful of socialist propaganda, and de Paepe argued that 'the word "socialist" frightens many workers'.⁵⁵ Thus was born in 1885 the *Parti ouvrier belge*: a workers' party in place of a socialist one. In Great Britain, trade-unionists objected to, and until 1918 were successful in preventing, the Labour Party from admitting members of other classes on an individual basis. If socialists were to be successful, theirs had to be a workers' party. In Sweden, the first local cells of the Social Democratic Party were in fact called *Arbetsarkommuner*, Workers' Communes.⁵⁶ Socialists were anxious to emphasize the class character of the movement and were willing to make doctrinal compromises to implant socialism among workers.

The Dilemma of Proletarian Electoralism

The majority which socialists expected to win in elections was to be formed by workers. The proletariat—acting upon its interests and conscious of its mission—was to be the social force precipitating society into socialism. But this proletariat was not, and never became, a numerical majority of voting members of any society. The prediction that the displaced members of the old middle classes would either become proletarians or join the army of the unemployed did not materialize.

The old middle classes, particularly the independent agricultural proprietors, almost vanished as a group in most Western European countries, but their sons and daughters were more likely to find employment in an office or a store than in a factory. Moreover, while the proportion of the adult population engaged in any activity outside the household drastically fell in the course of capitalist development, those excluded from gainful activities did not become a reserve proletariat. Extended compulsory education, forced retirement, large

⁵³ Jean-Jacques Fiechter, *Le socialisme français: de l'affaire Dreyfus à la grande guerre*. Geneva 1965, p. 258.

⁵⁴ Bergounioux and Manin, *La social-démocratie en le compromis*, p. 25.

⁵⁵ Landauer, *European Socialism*, I, pp. 457–8.

⁵⁶ Raymond Fualier, *La parti socialiste suédois. Son organisation*, Paris 1954, p. 29.

standing armies, effective barriers to economic participation of women, all had the effect of reducing entry into the proletariat.⁵⁷ As a result, from 1890 to 1980 the proletariat continued to be a minority of the population. In Belgium, the first European country to have built substantial industry, the proportion of workers did break the magic number of the majority when it reached 50.1 per cent in 1912. Since then it has declined systematically, down to 19.1 per cent in 1971. In Denmark, the proportion of workers in the electorate never exceeded 29 per cent. In Finland, it never surpassed 24 per cent. In France, this proportion declined from 39.4 per cent in 1893 to 24.8 per cent in 1968. In Germany, workers increased as a proportion of the electorate from 25.5 per cent in 1871, to 36.9 per cent in 1903, and since then has constituted about one third of the electorate. In Norway, workers constituted 33 per cent of the electorate in 1894 and their proportion peaked in 1900 at 34.1 per cent. In Sweden, the proportion of workers in the electorate grew from 28.9 per cent in 1908 to 40.4 per cent in 1952; then it declined to 38.5 per cent in 1964.

The rules of the democratic game, while universal and at times fair, show no compassion. If a party is to govern alone, unburdened by the moderating influence of alliances and the debts of compromise, it must obtain some specific proportion of the vote, not much different from 50 per cent. Electoral institutions preceded the birth of parties which sought to use them as the vehicle toward socialism, and those institutions carried within themselves the fundamental rule which makes the victory of an isolated minority impossible. A party representing a class which has fewer members than the other classes combined cannot win electoral battles.

The combination of minority status with majority rule constitutes the historical condition under which socialists have to act. This objective condition imposes upon socialist parties a choice: socialists must choose between a party homogeneous in its class appeal, but sentenced to perpetual electoral defeats, and a party that struggles for electoral success at the cost of diluting its class character. This choice is not between revolution and reform. There is no *a priori* reason, and no historical evidence, to suppose that an electoral class-pure party of workers would be any more revolutionary than a party heterogeneous in its class base. Indeed, class-pure electoral parties of workers, of which the SPD during the Weimar period is probably the prime example,⁵⁸ can be totally committed to the defence of particularistic interests of workers within the confines of capitalist society. Such class parties can easily become mere electoral interest groups, pressuring for a larger share of the national product without any concern for the manner in which it is produced. A pure party of workers who constituted a majority of the electorate would perhaps have maintained its ultimate commitment without a compromise, as socialists said they would when they saw the working class as majoritarian. But to

⁵⁷ Adam Przeworski and Ernest Underhill, 'The Process of Class Formation from Karl Kautsky's *The Class Struggle* to Recent Controversies', *Politics and Society*, 7, 1977, pp. 343-402; and 'The Evolution of European Class Structure during the Twentieth Century', unpublished MSS, University of Chicago 1979.

⁵⁸ Richard N. Hunt, *German Social Democracy, 1918-33*, Chicago 1970.

continue as a minority party dedicated exclusively to ultimate goals, in a game in which one needs a majority—more, an overwhelming mandate—to realize these goals, would have been absurd. To gain electoral influence for whatever aims, from the ultimate to the most immediate, working class parties must seek support from members of other classes.

Given the minority status of workers within the class structure of capitalist societies, the decision to participate in elections thus alters the very logic of the problem of revolutionary transformation. The democratic system played a perverse trick on socialist intentions: the emancipation of the working class could not be the task of workers themselves if this emancipation was to be realized through elections. The only question left was whether a majority for socialism could be recruited by seeking electoral support beyond the working class.

There is a peculiar tendency among contemporary observers, to see the strategy of appealing to a heterogeneous class base as a relatively recent effect of the 'deradicalization' of socialist movements. The German *Mittelklasse Strategie* is seen as the prototype of this new orientation and Kurt Schumacher as its architect.⁵⁹ In this interpretation socialist parties began to enlist support from groups other than workers only after they have given up their socialist goals.

This view is simply inaccurate. Socialists sought support beyond the working class as soon as the prospect of electoral victory became real and ever since they have continued to go back and forth between a search for allies and the emphasis on the working class. That triumphant forecast made by Engels in 1895 which predicted that socialists would become a force before which 'all powers will have to bow' was conditional in his view upon the success of the party in 'conquering the greater part of the middle strata of society, petty bourgeoisie and small peasants'. His advice to the French party—advice the French did not need since they were already heeding it⁶⁰—was the same: recruit the small peasants. The Erfurt Programme of 1891 set the tone in which appeals to 'the middle classes' were couched: their interests 'paralleled' those of the proletariat; they were the 'natural allies' of the proletariat.⁶¹ Guesdists in France began to advocate alliances as soon as Guesde was elected to the Parliament in 1893.⁶² In Belgium, the first programme adopted in 1894 by the *Parti ouvrier* appealed to the lower middle class and the intelligentsia.⁶³ In Sweden, a multi-class strategy was debated as early as 1889, and the party kept moving toward a heterogeneous class orientation until its full acceptance in 1920.⁶⁴ The British Labour Party did defeat, in 1912, a proposal to open the membership, on an individual basis, to 'managers, foremen, [and] persons engaged in commercial pursuits on their

⁵⁹ William E. Patterson, 'The German Social Democratic Party', in Patterson and Thomas, *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*.

⁶⁰ Carl Landauer, 'The Guesdists and the Small Farmer: Early Erosion of French Marxism', *International Review of Social History*, 6 (1961), pp. 212-25.

⁶¹ Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*.

⁶² Derfler, *Socialism since Marx*, p. 48.

⁶³ Landauer, *European Socialism*, I, p. 468.

⁶⁴ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*.

own account.⁶⁵ But in 1918, as it took a programmatic turn to the left, Labour opened its ranks to 'workers by brain'. Indeed, in his polemic with Beer, McKibbin interprets the very emphasis on socialism in the 1918 programme as an attempt to capture the 'professional middle classes'.⁶⁶ Revisionists everywhere asserted that workers were not a majority and that the party must seek support beyond the working class. Bernstein, Jaurès, and MacDonald came to this conclusion independently: once a party committed itself to electoral competition they had to embrace this conclusion. By 1915, Michels could already characterize social democratic strategy as follows: 'For motives predominantly electoral, the party of the workers seeks support from the petty bourgeois elements of society, and this gives rise to more or less extensive reactions upon the party itself. The Labour Party becomes the party of the 'people'. Its appeals are no longer addressed to the manual workers, but to "all producers", to the "entire working population", these phrases being applied to all the classes and all the strata of society except the idlers who live upon the income from investments.'⁶⁷

The post-war orientation of several social democratic parties toward broadly understood middle strata is not a result of a new strategic posture but rather a reflection of the changing class structure of Western Europe. The proportion of the population engaged in agriculture declined during the twentieth century, more rapidly during the 1950s than during any of the preceding decades. The 'new middle classes' almost replaced the 'old' one numerically. Party strategies reflected, albeit with some lag, the numerical evolution of class structure. What is relatively new, therefore, is only the explicit indication of salaried employees as a pool of potential socialist support. It was Bernstein after all who introduced the notion of the *Volkspartei*, not Schumacher or Brandt. The search for allies is inherent to electoralism.

Dissolving the Class Appeal

Once they decided to compete for the votes of 'natural allies', whether these were the old or the new middle classes, socialists were appealing to the overwhelming majority of the population. Branting's estimate in 1889 that the 'people' constituted ninety-five per cent of the Swedish society was probably only slightly exaggerated, given his definition of 'the people'.⁶⁸ Seeking an equitable distribution of the burden of World War I debt, *Labour and the New Social Order*, a programmatic document of the party, asserted that 'In this manner the Labour Party claims the support of four-fifths of the whole nation.'⁶⁹ There is no reason to doubt that today the working class together with its allies comprise around eighty per cent of the population of France or of the United

⁶⁵ Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, London 1974, p. 95.

⁶⁶ Samuel Beer, *British Politics in the Collectivist Age*, New York 1969 (2nd ed.); McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, p. 97.

⁶⁷ Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 254.

⁶⁸ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 135.

⁶⁹ Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labor*, New York 1918 (2nd ed.), p. 125.

States.⁷⁰ If to industrial workers we add white-collar employees, petty bourgeois, housewives, retirees, and students, almost no one is left to represent interests antagonistic to socialism. Exploiters remain but a handful: 'the businessman with a tax-free expense account, the speculator with tax-free capital gains and the retiring company director with a tax-free redundancy payment,' in the words of the 1959 Labour Party electoral manifesto.⁷¹

Yet social democratic parties have never obtained the votes of four-fifths of the electorate in any country. Only in a few instances have they won the support of one-half of the people who actually went to the polls. They are far from obtaining the votes of all whom they claim to represent. Moreover, they cannot even win the votes of all workers—the proletariat in the classical sense of the word. In several countries as many as one-third of manual workers vote for bourgeois parties. In Belgium as many as one half of the workers do not vote socialist.⁷² In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party lost 49 per cent of the working class vote in the 1979 election. Social democrats appear condemned to minority status when they are a class party, and they seem equally relegated when they seek to be the party of the masses, of the entire nation. As a pure party of workers they cannot win the mandate for socialism, but as a party of the entire nation they have not won it either.

Some of the reasons why no political party ever won a majority with a programme of socialist transformation are undoubtedly external to the electoral system. Yet social democratic parties face a purely electoral dilemma. Class shapes the political behaviour of individuals only as long as people who are workers are organized politically as workers. If political parties do not mobilize people *as* workers but as 'the masses', 'the people', 'consumers', 'taxpayers', or simply 'citizens', then workers are less likely to identify themselves as class members and, eventually, less likely to vote as workers. By broadening their appeal to the 'masses', social democrats weaken the general salience of class as a determinant of the political behaviour of individuals.

The strategies oriented toward broad electoral support have an effect not only upon the relation between workers and other classes but primarily within the class, upon the relations among workers. In order to be successful in electoral competition, social democratic parties must present themselves to different groups as an instrument for the realization of their immediate economic interests, immediate in the sense that these interests can be realized when the party is victorious in the forthcoming election. Supra-class alliances must be based on a convergence of immediate economic interests of the working class and of other groups. Social democrats must offer credits to the petty

⁷⁰ Parti Communiste Français, *Traité d'économie politique: le capitalisme monopoliste d'État*, 2 vols., Paris 1971; Erik Olin Wright, 'Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalism', *NLR* 98 (1976), pp. 3-42.

⁷¹ F. W. S. Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1949*, Glasgow 1969, p. 130.

⁷² Keith Hill, 'Belgium: Political Change in a Segmented Society', in Richard Rose (ed.), *Electoral Behavior: a Comparative Handbook*, New York 1974, p. 83.

bourgeoisie, pensions to salaried employees, minimal wages to workers, protection to consumers, education to the young, family allowances to families. This convergence cannot be found in measures that strengthen the cohesion and combativeness of workers against other classes. When social democrats extend their appeal, they must promise to struggle not for objectives specific to workers as a collectivity—those that constitute the public goods for workers as a class—but only those which workers share as individuals with members of other classes. The common grounds can be found in a shift of the tax burden from indirect to direct taxation, in consumer protection laws, in spending on public transport, and the like. These are concerns which workers as individuals share with others who receive low incomes, who purchase consumer products, who travel to work. They are not interests of workers as a class but of the poor, of consumers, commuters, etc.

None of this implies that the party no longer represents workers when it appeals to the masses. Although the convergence is never perfect and some interests of workers are often compromised, the party continues to represent those interests which workers as individuals share with other people. Hence social democratic parties oriented toward 'the people' continue to be parties of workers as individuals. But they cease to be the organization of workers as a class which disciplines individuals in their competition with each other by posing them against other classes. It is the very principle of class conflict—the conflict between internally cohesive collectivities—that becomes compromised as parties of workers become parties of the masses.

Differentiation of class appeal, however, affects not only the organization of workers as a class. It has a fundamental effect on the form of political conflicts in capitalist societies since it reinstates a classless vision of politics. When social democratic parties become parties 'of the entire nation', they reinforce the vision of politics as a process of defining the collective welfare of 'all members of the society'. Politics, once again, is defined on the dimension individual-nation, not in terms of class.

This de-emphasis of class conflict in turn affects workers. As class identification becomes less salient, socialist parties lose their unique appeal to workers. Social democratic parties are no longer qualitatively different from other parties; class loyalty is no longer the strongest base of self-identification. One can no longer recall, as Vivian Gornick did of her childhood, that: 'Before I knew I was Jewish or a girl I knew that I was a member of the working class.'⁷³ Workers see society as composed of individuals; they view themselves as members of collectivities other than class; they behave politically on the basis of religious, ethnic, regional, or some other affinity. They become Catholics, Southerners, Francophones, or simply 'citizens'.

It is now clear that the dilemma comes back with a vengeance within the very system of electoral competition. The choice between class

⁷³ Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism*, New York 1977, p. 3.

purity and broad support must be lived continually by social democratic parties because when they attempt to increase their electoral support beyond the working class these parties reduce their capacity to mobilize workers. This choice was not made once and for all by any party; nor does it represent a unidirectional evolution. Indeed, if there exists an electoral trade-off between appealing to the masses and recruiting workers, then strategic shifts are imperative from the purely electoral point of view. Histories of particular parties are replete with strategic reversals, with major changes of direction, controversies, schisms, and scissions. SPD returned to an emphasis on class in 1905; Swedish Social Democrats temporarily abandoned their attempt to become a multi-class party once in 1926, and then again in 1933; the Norwegian Labour Party emphasized its class orientation in 1918; German young socialists launched a serious attack on the *Mittelklasse Strategie* a decade ago; conflicts between an *ouvrierist* and a multiclass tendency today wrench several parties. In terms of purely electoral considerations social democrats face a dilemma. They are forced to go back and forth between an emphasis on class and an appeal to the nation. They seem unable to win either way, and they behave the way rational people do when confronted with dilemmas: they bemoan and regret, change their strategies, and once again bemoan and regret.

Social Democrats have not succeeded in turning elections into an instrument of socialist transformation. To be effective in elections they have to seek allies who would join workers under the socialist banner, yet at the same time they erode exactly that ideology which is the source of their strength among workers. They cannot remain a party of workers alone and yet they can never cease to be a workers party.

Reform and Revolution

Socialists entered into elections with ultimate goals. The Hague Congress of the First International proclaimed that the 'organization the proletariat into a political party is necessary to ensure the victory of social revolution and its ultimate goal—the abolishment of classes'.⁷⁴ The first Swedish programme specified that 'Social Democracy differs from other parties in that it aspires to completely transform the economic organization of bourgeois society and bring about the social liberation of the working class. . . .'⁷⁵ Even the most reformist among revisionists, Millerand, admonished that 'whoever does not admit the necessary and progressive replacement of capitalist property by social property is not a socialist'.⁷⁶

These were the goals that were to be reached through legislation, upon a mandate of an electorally expressed majority, as the will of universal suffrage. Socialists were going to abolish exploitation, to destroy the division of society into classes, to remove all economic and political inequalities, to end the wastefulness and anarchy of

⁷⁴ Szymon Chodak (ed.), *Systemy Partijny Współczesnego Kapitalizmu*, Warsaw 1962, p. 39.

⁷⁵ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, pp. 118–9.

⁷⁶ Bazar, *Modern Socialism*, p. 31.

capitalist production, to eradicate all sources of injustice and prejudice. They were going to emancipate not only workers but humanity, to build a society based on cooperation, to rationally orient energies and resources toward satisfaction of human needs, to create social conditions for an unlimited development of the personality. Rationality, justice and freedom were the guiding goals of the social democratic movement.

These were ultimate goals: they could not be realized immediately, for economic as well as political reasons. And social democrats were unwilling to wait for the day when these aims could finally be accomplished. They claimed to represent the interests of workers and of other groups not only in the future but as well within 'present-day', that is, capitalist society. The *Parti Socialiste Français*, led by Jaurès, proclaimed at its Tours Congress of 1902: 'The Socialist Party, rejecting the policy of all or nothing, has a programme of reforms whose realization it pursues forthwith', and listed 54 specific demands concerning democratization, secularization, organization of justice, family, education, taxation, protection of labour, social insurance, nationalization of industries, and foreign policy.⁷⁷ The first programme of the Swedish Social Democrats in 1897 demanded direct taxation, development of state and municipal productive activities, public credit including direct state control of credit for farmers, legislation concerning work conditions, old age, sickness, and accident insurance, legal equality, and freedoms of organization, assembly, speech, and press.⁷⁸

This orientation toward immediate improvements was never seen by its architects as a departure from ultimate goals. Since socialism was thought to be inevitable, there would be no reason why immediate measures should not be advocated by socialist parties: there was no danger, not even a possibility, that such measures could prevent the advent of the inescapable. As Kautsky put it, 'it would be a profound error to imagine that such reforms could delay the social revolution'.⁷⁹ Ultimate goals were going to be realized because History was on the side of socialism. Revisionists within the movement were, if anything, even more deterministic than those who advocated insurrectionary tactics. Millerand argued, for example, in his Saint-Mandé speech, that: 'Men do not and will not set up collectivism; it is setting itself up daily; it is, if I may be allowed the phrase, being secreted by the capitalist regime.'⁸⁰

Even when social democratic movements left the protection of history to rediscover a justification of socialism in ethical values, no dilemma appeared in the consciousness of socialist leaders. Bernstein's famous renunciation of final goals did not imply that they would remain unfulfilled, but only that the way to realize them was to concentrate on proximate aims. Jaurès, speaking about the conquest of political power by workers, provided the classical image: 'I do not believe, either,

⁷⁷ Ensor, *Modern Socialism*, p. 345.

⁷⁸ Tingga, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, pp. 119-20.

⁷⁹ Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, p. 93.

⁸⁰ Ensor, p. 50.

that there will necessarily be an abrupt leap, the crossing of the abyss; perhaps we shall be aware of having entered the zone of the Socialistic State as navigators are aware of having crossed the line of a hemisphere—not that they have been able to see as they crossed a cord stretched over the ocean warning them of their passage, but that little by little they have been led into a new hemisphere by the progress of their ship.⁸¹ Indeed, for social democrats immediate reforms constitute ‘steps’ in the sense that gradually they accumulate toward a complete restructuring of society. Anticipating Bernstein’s argumentation, George von Vollmar, the leader of the Bavarian wing of the SPD, declared at the Erfurt Congress: ‘Beside the general or ultimate goal we see a nearer aim: the advancement of the most immediate needs of the people. For me, the achievement of the most immediate demands is the main thing, not only because they are of great propagandist value and serve to enlist the masses, but also because, in my opinion, this gradual progress, this gradual socialization, is the method strongly indicated for a progressive transition.’⁸²

Reform and revolution do not require a choice within the social democratic view of the world. To bring about ‘social revolution’—the phrase which before 1917 connoted transformation of social relations but not necessarily an insurrection—it is sufficient to follow the path of reforms. Reforms are thought to be cumulative and irreversible: there was nothing strange in Jaurès’ argument that: ‘Precisely because it is a party of revolution . . . the Socialist Party is the most actively reformist. . . .’⁸³ The more reforms, the faster they are introduced, the nearer the social revolution, the sooner the socialist ship would sail into the new world. And even when times are not auspicious for new steps to be made, even when political or economic circumstances require that reforms be postponed, eventually each new reform would build upon the past accomplishments. Mitigating the effects of capitalism and transforming it piece by piece would eventually lead to a complete restructuring of society. Reviewing Miliband’s (1969) book, Benjamin Barber best expressed this perspective: ‘surely at some point mitigation becomes transformation, attenuation becomes abolition; at some point capitalism’s “concessions” annihilate capitalism. . . . This is not to say that such a point has been reached, only that there must be such a point.’⁸⁴

Welfare Displaces Socialization

The ‘social revolution’ envisioned by social democrats was necessary because capitalism was irrational and unjust. And the fundamental cause of this inefficiency and inequity was private property of the means of production. While private property was occasionally seen as the source of most disparate evils—from prostitution and alcoholism to wars—it was always held directly responsible for the irrationality of the capitalist system and for the injustice and poverty that it generated.

⁸¹ Ensor, *Modern Socialism*, p. 121.

⁸² Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, p. 258.

⁸³ Flechter, *Le socialisme français*, p. 163.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Barber.

Already in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, one of the most important theoretical sources of the socialist movement, Engels emphasized that the increasing rationality of capitalist production within each firm is accompanied, and must be accompanied, by the chaos and anarchy of production at the societal scale. 'The contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation,' Engels wrote, 'now presents itself as an *antagonism* between the organization of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society generally.'⁸⁵ Speaking in 1920, Branting repeated that: 'In the basic premises of the present social order there are no satisfactory guarantees either that production as an entity is given the most rational orientation possible, or that profit in the various branches is used in the way that is best from the national economic and social point of view.'⁸⁶

The second effect of private property is the unjust distribution of material rewards which it generates. 'The economic case for socialism,' wrote a Labour Party theoretician, 'is largely based on the inability of capitalism to bring about any equitable or even practicable distribution of commodities in an age of mechanization and mass-production.'⁸⁷ Even the most decisive break with the Marxist tradition, the SPD's Bad Godesberg programme of 1959, maintained that the 'Market economy does not assure of itself a just distribution of income and property'.

Given this analysis, socialization or nationalization of the means of production was the principal method of realizing socialist goals and hence the first task to be accomplished by social democrats after the conquest of power. 'Social revolution,' writes Tingsten 'was always understood to mean systematic, deliberate socialization under the leadership of the Social Democratic working class.'⁸⁸ Socialization or nationalization—a terminological ambiguity which was significant—was the manner by which socialist revolution would be realized.

Until World War I, as socialist parties concentrated their efforts on winning suffrage and organizing workers as a class, little if any concrete thought was devoted to the means by which socialization was to be accomplished. The very possibility of actually being in a position to pursue a programme of socialization caught all socialist parties by surprise when the war destroyed the established order, unleashed spontaneous movements of factory occupations, and opened the doors to government participation. Indeed, the wave of factory occupations which occurred in Austria, Germany, Finland, Italy, and Sweden appeared to the established socialist parties and trade-unions as almost

⁸⁵ Frederick Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', In L. Feuer (ed.), Marx and Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, Garden City 1959, pp. 97-8.

⁸⁶ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 239.

⁸⁷ Sir Stafford Cripps, 'Democracy or Dictatorship?'—the Issue for the Labour Party', *Political Quarterly*, 1933, pp. 467-81.

⁸⁸ Tingsten, p. 131.

as much a threat to their own authority and organization as to the capitalist order.⁸⁹

As these spontaneous movements were repressed or exhausted, the logic of parliamentarism re-established its grip on the social democratic movement. Nationalization efforts turned out to be so similar in several countries that their story can be summarized briefly. The issue of socialization was immediately placed on the agenda of social democratic parties in Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, and Sweden and of the CGT in France. In several countries, notably Germany, Great Britain, and Sweden, 'socialization commissions' were established by respective parliaments, while in France Léon Blum introduced in the Chamber a bill to nationalize the railway industry. The commissions were supposed to prepare detailed programmes of socialization—in some cases for all basic industries and in others for specific ones, typically coal. The British commission finished its career quickly as Lloyd George simply ignored its recommendations; in Germany the issue of coal nationalization lingered after the resignation of the first commission; and in Sweden the socialization committee worked 16 years, spending most of its time studying similar efforts elsewhere, and expired without making any recommendations. Although social democrats formed or entered governments in several countries, the global result of these first attempts at socialization was null: with the exception of the French armament industry in 1936, not a single company was nationalized in Western Europe by a social democratic government during the entire inter-war period.

How did it happen that the movement that aimed to revolutionize society by changing the very base of its productive organization ended the period of integration into the political institutions of capitalism without even touching its fundamentals? When Marx described in 1850 the anatomy of capitalist democracy, he was certain that, unless withdrawn, universal suffrage would lead from 'political to social emancipation'; that once endowed with political rights, workers would proceed immediately to destroy the 'social power' of capitalists by socializing the means of production.⁹⁰ Still in 1928, Wigforss saw this outcome as inevitable: 'The universal suffrage is incompatible with a society divided into a small class of owners and a large class of unpropertied. Either the rich and the propertied will take away universal suffrage, or the poor, with the help of their right to vote, will procure for themselves a part of the accumulated riches.'⁹¹ And yet while social democrats held power in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, and Sweden, riches remained nearly intact, and certainly private property in the means of production was not disturbed.

⁸⁹ Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, Princeton 1975, p. 63; Gwyn Williams, *Proletarian Order: Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins of Communism in Italy, 1911-21*, London 1975, pp. 121-45; Paulo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, I, *Da Bordighi a Gramsci*, Turin 1967, pp. 50-63; Ernst Wigforss, 'Industrial Democracy in Sweden', *International Labour Review*, 1924, 9, pp. 667-679, p. 672.

⁹⁰ Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-50*, Moscow 1952, p. 62.

⁹¹ Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, pp. 274-5.

One can cite a number of reasons. Not negligible was the theoretical ambiguity of the very project of the 'expropriation of expropriators'. One difficulty lay in that ambiguous relation between 'socialization'—the turning over of industries to their employees—and 'nationalization'—their general direction by the state. On the one hand, as Korsch,⁹² Wigforss,⁹³ and others pointed out, direct control of particular firms by the immediate producers would not remove the antagonism between producers and consumers, that is, workers in other firms. On the other hand, transfer to centralized control of the state would have the effect of replacing the private authority of capital by the bureaucratic authority of the government, and the Soviet example loomed largely as a negative one. The '*gestionnaire*' tendency dominated in Germany, where the principle was even incorporated into the Constitution, and Sweden; the '*planiste*' tendency found its most important articulation in Belgium and France under the influence of Henri de Man. A veritable wave of constitution writing ensued in the immediate aftermath of World War I: Otto Bauer in Austria (1919), Karl Kautsky in Germany (1925), G. D. H. Cole in Great Britain (1919), Henri de Man in Belgium—all rushed to devise some way of combining rationality at the level of the society as a whole with the control of the immediate producers over their own activities.

Yet this burst of theoretical activity came rather belatedly in relation to the demands of practical politics. The fact, frequently admitted by social democratic politicians, was that they did not know how to proceed to the realization of their programme. The choice of industries which were to be nationalized, methods of financing, techniques of management, and the mutual relations among sectors turned out to be technical problems for which social democrats were unprepared. Hence they formed study commissions and waited.

Nevertheless, the cause of the social democratic inertia was much more profound than the ambiguity of their plans. Socialists never won a sufficient number of votes to obtain a parliamentary majority and hence to be able to legislate anything without support, or at least consent, of other parties. Remarkably, and quite to their surprise, socialist parties in several countries were invited to take office as minority governments or to enter governments as members of multi-party coalitions. And the question of what to do as a minority government presented itself as the following choice: either the party would pursue its socialist objectives and be promptly defeated or it would behave like any other party, administering the system and introducing only those few reforms for which it could obtain a parliamentary majority.

Each strategy was viewed in terms of its long-term effects. Proponents of the maximalist strategy argued that the party would educate the electorate about its socialist program and would expose the reactionary character of the bourgeois parties. They claimed that the people would then return the party to office with a majority and the mandate

⁹² Karl Korsch, 'What is Socialization?', *New German Critique*, 6 (1965), pp. 60–82.

⁹³ Tjningsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 208.

to pursue its socialist programme. Only in Norway was this strategy adopted; the government lasted three days in 1928; and the party was returned to office four years later only after it had moderated its socialist objectives.

Proponents of a minimal programme argued that the most important task a party could accomplish was to demonstrate that it was 'fit to govern', that it was a governmental party. 'We are not going to undertake office to prepare for a General Election,' said MacDonald in 1924, 'we are going to take office in order to work.'⁹⁴ Their expectation, in turn, rested on the belief that reforms were irreversible and cumulative. As Lyman put it, 'Gradualists imagined that socialism could be achieved by instalments, each instalment being accepted with no more serious obstruction on the part of the Conservatives than Labour opposition generally gave to Tory governments. Each instalment would then remain, unharmed by interludes of Tory rule, and ready to serve as the foundation on which the next Labour government would resume construction of the socialist commonwealth.'⁹⁵ Hence the party would come into office, introduce those reforms and only those reforms for which it could muster the support of a parliamentary majority, and then leave to return when a new mandate issued from the electorate. 'We hope to continue only as long in office, but certainly as long in office, as will enable us to do some good work that will remove many obstacles which would have hampered future governments if they found the problems that we know how to face': this was the intention of the Labour Party in 1924, according to MacDonald.⁹⁶ Hence Blum introduced a distinction between the 'exercise of power' and the 'conquest of power': as a minority socialists could only exercise it, but they should exercise it in such a way that would eventually lead to its conquest.⁹⁷

If socialists could not pursue an immediate programme of nationalization, what could they do in the meantime? They could and did pursue ad hoc measures designed to improve the conditions of workers: develop housing programmes, institute some protection from unemployment, introduce minimum wage laws, income and inheritance taxes, old age pensions. Such measures, although they favoured workers, were neither politically unfeasible nor economically shocking—they continued the tradition of reforms associated with Bismarck, Disraeli, and Giolitti. These measures neither modified the structure of the economy nor the political balance of forces.

The fact is that until the 1930s social democrats did not have any kind of economic policy of their own. The economic theory of the Left was the theory that criticized capitalism, claimed the superiority of

⁹⁴ Milliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, p. 101.

⁹⁵ Richard Lyman, 'The British Labour Party: the Conflict between Socialist Ideals and Practical Politics between the Wars', *Journal of British Studies*, 5 (1965), pp. 140–52.

⁹⁶ Richard Lyman, *The First Labour Government 1924*, London 1957, p. 106; for a similar statement by Branting see Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 238.

⁹⁷ Joel Colton, 'Leon Blum and the French Socialists as a Government Party', *Journal of Politics*, 15 (1955), pp. 517–543.

socialism, and led to a programme of nationalization of the means of production. Once this programme was suspended—it was not yet abandoned—no socialist economic policy was left.⁹⁸ Socialists behaved like all other parties: with some distributional bias toward their constituency but full of respect for the golden principles of the balanced budget, deflationary anti-crisis policies, gold standard, and so on. Of Blum it is said that he 'could envisage no intermediate stage between pure doctrinaire socialism and the free play of capitalism . . .',⁹⁹ and it seems that neither could anyone else. The only known theory of reforms was that which called for nationalization; no other coherent alternative existed.

Such an alternative did emerge in response to the Great Depression. In Sweden, Norway, and to a lesser extent France, socialist governments responded to unemployment with a series of anti-cyclical policies that broke the existing economic orthodoxy. It remains a matter of controversy whether the Swedish policies were developed autonomously, from Marx via Wicksell, or were an application of the already circulating ideas of Keynes.¹⁰⁰ The fact is that social democrats everywhere soon discovered in Keynes' ideas, particularly after the appearance of his *General Theory*, something they urgently needed: a distinct policy for administering capitalist economies. The Keynesian revolution—and this is what it was—provided social democrats with a goal and hence the justification of their governmental role and simultaneously transformed the ideological significance of distributive policies that favoured the working class.

From the passive victim of economic cycles, the state became transformed almost overnight into an institution by which society could regulate crises to maintain full employment. Describing the policies of the Swedish government of 1932, Gustav Möller, the architect of the unemployment programme, emphasized that previously unemployment relief was a 'system meant only to supply bare necessities to the unemployed, and did not have the purpose of counteracting the depression. . . . Economic cycles, it was said, follow natural economic laws, and governmental interference with them is, by and large, purposeless and, from a financial point of view, even dangerous in the long run'.¹⁰¹ Both Möller and Wigforss¹⁰² described how the Swedish Social Democrats discovered that unemployment could be reduced and the economy invigorated if the state followed anti-cyclical policies, allowing deficits to finance productive public works during depressions and paying back the debts during periods of expansion. Society is not helpless against the whims of the capitalist market, the

⁹⁸ Bergounioux and Manin, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis*, p. 110.

⁹⁹ Irwin M. Wall, 'The Resignation of the First Popular Front Government of Leon Blum, June 1937', *French Historical Studies*, 6 (1970), pp. 538–54.

¹⁰⁰ Karl-Gustaf Landgren, *Den 'Nya Ekonomien' i Sverige*, Stockholm 1960; Otto Steigler, *Studien Zur Entstehung Der Neuen Wirtschaftspolitik in Schweden: Eine Anti-Kritik*, Berlin 1971; Bo Gustafsson, 'A Perennial of Doctrinal History: Keynes and the "Stockholm School"', *Economy and History*, 17 (1973), pp. 114–28.

¹⁰¹ Gustav Möller, 'The Unemployment Policy', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 197 (1938), pp. 47–72, p. 49.

¹⁰² Ernst Wigforss, 'The Financial Policy During Depression and Boom', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 197 (1938), pp. 25–40.

economy can be controlled, and the welfare of citizens can be continually enhanced by the active role of the state: this was the new discovery of social democrats.

And this was not all: Keynesianism was not only a theory that justified socialist participation in government but, even more fortuitously from the social democratic point of view, it was a theory that suddenly granted a universalistic status to the interests of workers. Earlier, all demands for increased consumption were viewed as inimical to the national interest: higher wages meant lower profits and hence a reduced opportunity for investment and future development. The only conceivable response to crises was to cut costs of production, that is, wages. This was still the view of the Labour Party in 1929. But in the logic of Keynes' theory higher wages, particularly if the wage fund was increased by raising employment rather than the wage rate (which did not rise in Sweden until 1936), meant an increase of aggregate demand, which implied increased expectations of profit, increased investment, and hence economic stimulation. The significance of increasing wages changed from being viewed as an impediment to national economic development to being its stimulus. Corporatist defence of the interests of workers, a policy social democrats pursued during the 'twenties, and the electoral strategy toward the 'people' now found ideological justification in a technical economic theory.

The Keynesian turn soon led social democrats to develop a full-fledged ideology of the 'welfare state'.¹⁰³ Social democrats defined their role as that of modifying the play of the market forces, in effect abandoning the project of nationalization altogether. The successful application of Keynesian instruments was seen as the demonstration that nationalization—full of problems and uncertainties as it proved to be—was not only impossible to achieve in a parliamentary way but was simply unnecessary. Keynes himself wrote: 'It is not the ownership of the instruments of production which it is important for the state to assume. If the state is able to determine the aggregate amount of resources devoted to augmenting the instruments and the basic rate of reward to those who own them, it will have accomplished all that is necessary.'¹⁰⁴ As Wigforss argued further, state ownership of particular industries would only result in the socialist government being forced to behave as a capitalist firm, subject to 'the chaos of the market', while by indirect control the state could rationalize the economy as a whole and orient it toward the general welfare.¹⁰⁵

The theoretical underpinning of this new perspective was the distinction between the concept of property as the authority to manage and property as legal possession. Already Bernstein claimed that 'the basic issue of socialization is that we place production, economic life,

¹⁰³ Aaa Briggs, 'The Welfare State in Historical Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1961), pp. 221-258.

¹⁰⁴ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, New York 1964, p. 378.

¹⁰⁵ Lef Lewin, 'The Debate on Economic Planning in Sweden, in Steven Koblick (ed.), *Sweden's Development from Poverty to Affluence, 1750-1970*, Minneapolis 1975, p. 286.

under the control of the public weal'.¹⁰⁶ Instead of direct ownership, the state could achieve all the socialist goals by influencing private industry to behave in the general interest. 'The essence of nationalization,' wrote de Man in 1934 'is less the transfer of property than the transfer of authority. . . .'¹⁰⁷ If the state could regulate private industry when necessary and if it could mitigate the effects of the free play of market forces, then direct ownership would be unnecessary and inadvisable: this became the motto of social democracy in the aftermath of the Keynesian revolution.

In sum, unable as minority governments to pursue the social programme, in the mid-thirties, social democracy found a distinct economic policy which justified its governmental role, which specified a number of intermediate reforms that could be successively accomplished within the confines of capitalism, and which provided in several countries a successful electoral platform. Caught in the 'twenties in an all-or-nothing position, social democrats discovered a new path to reform by abandoning the project of nationalization for that of general welfare.

The Abandonment of Reformism

The abandonment of programmatic nationalization of the means of production did not imply that the state would never become engaged in economic activities. In contemporary Western European countries between 5 and 20 per cent of gross product is now being produced by enterprises of which the state is in some form a complete owner.¹⁰⁸ The paths by which this 'public sector' developed are too varied to recount here. In Italy and Spain the public sector constitutes mainly a fascist legacy; in Austria it consists predominantly of confiscated German properties; in Great Britain and France a wave of nationalizations followed World War II. Characteristically, state enterprises are limited to credit institutions, coal, iron and steel, energy production and distribution, transport, and communication. Outside these sectors only those companies which are threatened with bankruptcy and hence a reduction of employment pass into public hands. Instances in which the state would be engaged in producing and selling final-demand goods are extremely rare; they seem to be limited to the automobile industry. The state engages in those economic activities which are necessary for the economy as a whole and sells its products and services mainly to private firms. Hence, the state does not compete with private capital but rather provides the inputs necessary for the profitable functioning of the economy as a whole.

This division between the state and the market has been recently enshrined in the 'public goods theory of the state'.¹⁰⁹ This theory assumes that the capitalist market is a natural form of economic

¹⁰⁶ Quoted by Korsch, 'What is Socialization?', *New German Critique*, 6 (1975), p. 65.

¹⁰⁷ Bergounioux and Manin, *La social-démocratie ou le compromis*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁸ *Le Dossier des Nationalisations*, *Le Monde*, Paris 1977.

¹⁰⁹ Paul A. Samuelson, 'The Pure Theory of Capital Expenditure', in Joseph B. Stiglitz (ed.), *The Collected Scientific Papers of Paul A. Samuelson*, Cambridge (USA) 1966; Richard A. Musgrave, 'Provision for Social Goods in the Market System', *Public Finance*, 26 (1971), pp. 304-320.

activity; the existence of the market and its laws are taken as given. The role of the state is supposed to be limited to the provision of so-called 'public goods': those that are indivisible and which must be supplied to everyone if they are supplied to anyone. It is proper for the state to construct public roads or to train the labour force: rational private entrepreneurs will not provide such goods since they cannot prevent people from using roads or from selling their newly acquired skills to competitors. The role of the state is thus supposed to be limited to those activities that are unprofitable for private entrepreneurs yet needed for the economy as a whole.

Hence, the structure of the capitalist systems built by social democrats turned out to be the following: (1) the state operates those activities which are unprofitable for private firms but necessary for the economy as a whole; (2) the state regulates, particularly by pursuing anti-cyclical policies, the operation of the private sector; and (3) the state mitigates, through welfare measures, the distributional effects of the operation of the market.

The regulatory activities of the state are based on the belief that private capitalists can be induced to allocate resources in a manner desired by citizens and expressed at the polls. The basic notion is that in a capitalistic democracy resources are allocated by two mechanisms: the 'market', in which the weight of preferences of decision-makers is proportional to the resources they control, and the state, in which the weight of preferences is distributed equally to persons *qua* citizens. The essence of contemporary social democracy is the conviction that the market can be directed to those allocations of any good, public or private, that are preferred by citizens and that by gradually rationalizing the economy the state can turn capitalists into private functionaries of the public without altering the juridical status of private property.

Having made the commitment to maintain private property of the means of production, to assure efficiency, and to mitigate distributional effects, social democracy ceased to be a reformist movement.¹¹⁰ Reformism always meant a gradual progression toward structural transformations; reformism was traditionally justified by the belief that reforms are cumulative, that they constitute steps, that they lead in some direction. The current policy of social democrats by its very logic no longer permits the cumulation of reforms.

The abandonment of reformism is a direct consequence of those reforms that have been accomplished. Since the state is engaged almost exclusively in those activities which are unprofitable from the private point of view, it is deprived of financial resources needed to continue the process of nationalization. Having nationalized deficitary sectors, social democrats undermined their very capacity to gradually extend the public realm. At the same time, having strengthened the market, social democrats perpetuate the need to mitigate the distributional effect of its operation. Welfare reforms do not even have to be 'undone' by bour-

¹¹⁰ See particularly Brandt's view in Willy Brandt, Bruno Kreisky and Olaf Palme, *La social-démocratie et l'avenir*, Paris 1976.

geois governments. It is sufficient that the operation of the market is left to itself for any length of time and inequalities increase, unemployment fluctuates, shifts of demand for labour leave new groups exposed to impoverishment, etc. As Martin put it with regard to Great Britain, 'The "basic structure of the full employment welfare state" did not prove as durable as Crosland's analysis would lead us to expect. However, this was not because Conservative governments between 1951 and 1964 proceeded to dismantle it. . . . All that was necessary to undermine the full employment welfare state was for the Conservative governments simply to do nothing to counteract these processes.'¹¹¹ Mitigation does not become transformation: indeed, without transformation the need to mitigate becomes eternal. Social democrats find themselves in the situation which Marx attributed to Louis Bonaparte: their policies seem contradictory since they are forced at the same time to strengthen the productive power of capital and to counteract its effects.

The final result of this orientation is that social democrats again find themselves without a distinct alternative of their own as they face a crisis of the international system. When in office they are forced to behave like any other party, relying on deflationary, cost-cutting measures to ensure private profitability and the capacity to invest. Measures oriented to increase democracy at the work-place—the recent rediscovery of social democrats¹¹²—not surprisingly echo the posture of the movement in the 1920s, another period when the Left lacked any macro-economic approach of its own.

Economic Bases of Class Compromise

As soon as social democrats formed governments after World War I, they discovered that their concern with justice was not immediately compatible with the goal of increased productivity. In Wigforss' words, 'Because Social Democracy works for a more equal and more just distribution of property and incomes, it must never forget that one must produce before one has something to distribute.'¹¹³ The concern for restoring and extending industrial productive capacity quickly came to dominate the first discussions of socialization of industry in Germany and Sweden.¹¹⁴ Certainly a just distribution of poverty was not the socialist promise, and to enhance affluence social democrats had to focus their efforts on increasing productivity.

But without nationalization of the means of production, increases of productivity require profitability of private enterprise. As long as the process of accumulation is private, the entire society is dependent upon maintaining private profits and upon the actions of capitalists allocating

¹¹¹ Andrew Martin, 'Is Democratic Control of Capitalist Economies Possible?', in Leon N. Lindberg et al, *Stress and Contradiction in Modern Capitalism*, Lexington 1975, pp. 13–56, p. 28.

¹¹² Brandt, Kreisky and Palme, *La social-démocratie et l'avenir*.

¹¹³ Timothy A. Tilton, 'A Swedish Road to Socialism: Ernst Wigforss and the Ideological Foundations of Swedish Social Democracy', *American Political Science Review*, 73 (1979), pp. 505–520, p. 516.

¹¹⁴ Mäler, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, p. 194; Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats*, p. 230.

these profits. Hence the efficacy of social democrats—as of any other party—in regulating the economy and mitigating the social effects depends upon the profitability of the private sector and the willingness of capitalists to cooperate. The very capacity of social democrats to regulate the economy depends upon the profits of capital. This is the structural barrier which cannot be broken: the limit of any policy is that investment and thus profits must be protected in the long run.

The basic compromise of social democrats with private capital is thus an expression of the very structure of capitalist society. Once private property of the means of production was left intact, it became in the interest of wage-earners that capitalists appropriate profits. As Chancellor Schmidt put it, 'The profits of enterprises today are the investments of tomorrow, and the investments of tomorrow are the employment of the day after' (*Le Monde*, July 6, 1976). This expectation—that current profits would be transformed into future improvements of material conditions of wage-earners—became the foundation of the social democratic consent to capitalism.¹¹⁵ Social democrats consent to the right of capitalists to withhold a part of societal product because the profits appropriated by capital are expected to be saved, invested, transformed into productive capacity, and partly distributed as gains to other groups. Social democrats protect profits from revindictive demands of the masses because radical redistributive policies are not in the interest of wage-earners.

This is why social democrats trade-off the abolition of private property of the means of production for cooperation of capitalists in increasing productivity and distributing its gains. This is why social democrats not only attempt to reproduce capitalism but struggle to improve it even against the resistance of capitalists. Nationalization of the means of production has turned out to be electorally unfeasible; radical redistributive policies result in economic crises which are not in the interest of wage-earners; and general affluence can be increased only if capitalists are made to cooperate and wage-earners are continually disciplined to wait.

Crisis and the Workers Government

Social democrats will not lead European societies into socialism. Even if workers would prefer to live under socialism, the process of transition must lead to a crisis before socialism could be organized. To reach higher peaks one must traverse a valley, and this descent will not be completed under democratic conditions.

Suppose that social democrats win elections and attempt to use their position for a democratic transition to socialism. Given the social structure of capitalist societies, such an electoral victory is possible only if support can be obtained from several groups: industrial workers, non-manual employees, petite bourgeoisie, farmers, housewives,

¹¹⁵ Adam Przeworski, 'Material Bases of Consent: Economic and Politics in a Hegemonic System', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 1 (1979), pp. 21-63.

retired people, and/or students. Hence pressures for a significant improvement of material conditions erupt from several groups. Wages, particularly the minimal or 'vital' wages (*saludo vital* in Chile, *SMIC* in France), must be increased. Unemployment must be reduced. Transfers, particularly family allowances, must be raised. Credit for small enterprises and farms must become cheaper and available at a higher risk. These demands can be financed by (1) a redistribution of personal incomes (both through direct taxation and a reduction of wage differentials), (2) increased utilization of latent capacity, (3) spending of foreign reserves or borrowing, and/or (4) reduction of the rate of profit.¹¹⁶ The sum of the first three sources will not be sufficient to satisfy the demands. Redistribution of top incomes does not have much of a quantitative effect, and it cannot reach too far down without threatening the electoral support of salaried employees.

Forced to pay higher wages, and to keep employment beyond the efficient level, capitalists can respond only by increasing the prices of wage goods. Inflation is also fueled by balance of payment difficulties resulting from the necessity to import wage goods and from speculative pressures. Hence, either an inflationary dynamic sets into motion or, if prices are controlled, scarcities appear, a black market is organized, and so on. Eventually nominal wage increases become eroded, as they were in France in 1936,¹¹⁷ in Chile and in Portugal.

Under normal circumstances it can be expected that the increase of aggregate demand should stimulate investment and employment. Redistributive measures, even if they include inorganic emission, are usually justified not only by appeals to justice but also to efficiency. As lower incomes increase, so does the demand for wage goods. The utilization of latent capacity and foreign reserves are seen as a cushion that would protect prices from increased demand during the short period before investment picks up and eventually when supply rises. It is expected that profits from a larger volume of sales will be reinvested and thus the economy will be stimulated to develop at a faster pace. This was, for example, the Vuskovic programme in Chile—not at all unreasonable under normal circumstances.

Such a program cannot be successful, however, when economic demands grow spontaneously and when they are accompanied by structural transformations. Wage demands are likely to become confiscatory under such circumstances, and capitalists expect that these demands will be enforced, or at least condoned, by the government. Measures of nationalization, distribution of land, and monopolization of credit and foreign exchange by the state threaten the very institution of private profit. Under such circumstances, rational private capitalists will not invest. A transition to socialism must therefore generate an economic crisis. Investment falls sharply, prices increase, nominal wage gains become eroded, and eventually output falls, demand slackens, unemployment reappears as a major problem. What is not possible is thus the programme articulated by Allende when he said that 'the

¹¹⁶ Serge-Christof Kolm, *La transition socialiste*, Paris 1977.

¹¹⁷ Michael Kalecki, 'The Lesson of the Blum Experiment', *Economic Journal*, 48 (1938), pp. 26-41.

political model toward socialism that my government is applying requires that the socio-economic revolution take place simultaneously with an uninterrupted economic expansion.'¹¹⁸ What is not possible is the realization of Blum's belief 'that a better distribution... would revive production at the same time that it would satisfy justice'.¹¹⁹ What is not possible is a transition to socialism that begins with '*une augmentation substantielle des salaires et traitement*'.¹²⁰

Faced with an economic crisis, threatened with loss of electoral support, concerned about the possibility of a fascist counter-revolution, social democrats abandon the project of transition or at least pause to wait for more auspicious times. They find the courage to explain to the working class that it is better to be exploited than to create a situation which contains the risk of turning against them. They refuse to stake their fortunes on a worsening of the crisis. They offer the compromise; they maintain and defend it. The question which remains is whether there exists a way to escape the alternative defined for the Left by Olof Palme: 'Either to return to Stalin and Lenin, or take the road that joins the tradition of social democracy'.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Stefan De Vylder, *Allende's Chile: the Political Economy of the Rise and Fall of the Unidad Popular*, Cambridge 1976, p. 53.

¹¹⁹ Etienne Weil-Raynall, 'Les obstacles économiques à l'expérience Blum', *Le Renouveau Socialiste*, 98 (1956).

¹²⁰ Parti Communiste Français, Parti Socialiste Français, Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche, *Programme Commun du Gouvernement*, Paris 1972, p. 1.

¹²¹ Brandt, Krelsky and Palme, *La social-démocratie et l'avenir*, p. 120.

China's Oppositions

Since late 1978 an original dissident movement has sprung up in the main cities of China under the slogan Democracy and Science. This movement is still in its infancy, and the conditions under which it operates change from day to day. It is heterogeneous in composition, and it is not yet clear in which direction it will evolve, assuming that it is not successfully suppressed by the authorities. Here I set out to describe the nature and aims of this movement, beginning with an account of the wider political context within which it has emerged. The democratic movement in China is only one manifestation of a shifting and unstable political conjuncture over the last two to three years. It is necessary to examine the nature of this conjuncture if only because the continued existence of independent political tendencies hinges greatly on it.¹ Is it justified to use the term 'dissident' in connection with the Chinese democratic movement? Few of its supporters are openly opposed to the Party leaders around Deng Xiaoping, and some of the main activists in at least one of the groups associated with it are members of the Communist Party and the Communist Youth League.² A lively

if shortlived theoretical exchange went on between its leading thinkers and contributors to the more outspoken official publications. None of its main tendencies is anti-socialist, and only one (Wei Jingsheng's *Exploration*) is anti-Marxist if one takes the term Marxist in its wider definition. In this respect at least they have little in common with most Soviet and Eastern European groups to which the label 'dissident' attaches. But whatever its connections, the democratic movement has no official status, and not all its vows of loyalty to the Party need be taken at face value. What is more, its supporters share in common with dissidents in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe a belief in the superiority of Democracy over Dictatorship and a tendency to understand those concepts abstractly, without reference to the social systems that underlie them. It is therefore not unreasonable to categorize it as a movement of dissent.

The Setting

In a recent speech to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the veteran leader Ye Jianying spoke of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath as an 'appalling catastrophe' that 'traumatized our Party and people.' These sentiments are widely shared by Chinese of all social groups. They are a main reason for the present popularity of Deng Xiaoping, who was both an opponent and a victim of the campaigns of the late 1960s.

The Cultural Revolution was an extremely complex historical movement within which many different forces sought to express themselves. A minority of Red Guard organizations successfully resisted the manipulation of the Party leaders and developed independent political positions, but most became bogged down under the influence of competing groups in the Party leadership in an increasingly violent power struggle in which factional allegiance got the better of political principle. The outcome of the Cultural Revolution at the level of the Party leadership was the emergence of a new ruling group around Mao which lacked broad support, either in the country or in the Party, and which pursued its political aims through increasingly dictatorial means.

The characteristic political instrument of this new ruling group was the Campaign or *yundong*, involving the mobilization of large numbers of people and resources to achieve the political goals of the Party leaders.³

¹ Non-Chinese press sources on which this study is based (excluding those referred to in separate footnotes below) are articles by David Bonavia, Melinda Liu, Jerome Alan Cohen and Helmut Oplatal in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (hereafter FEER) for the whole of 1979; and by Jay Mathews and Fox Butterfield in the *International Herald Tribune* for late October and early November 1979. Official statements by Chinese Communist leaders referred to in this article can be found unless otherwise indicated in *Beijing Review* or in the Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation section of *The China Quarterly*. Some translations from Beijing unofficial journals can be found in the US Government series *Joint Publications Research Series* (hereafter JPRS).

² Xu Wenli's *April Fifth Forum* (*Sinn hui-tan*); see Phoenix van Kemenade-Chang, 'Peking-lente bloeit weer op,' in *Nieuwsnet*, Amsterdam, 20 October 1979.

³ On campaigns see F. H. Wang, 'Behind the Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius

During campaigns the pressure mounted on local cadres to root out ever larger numbers of 'class enemies'. The mental and physical strain of constant criticism, self-criticism and 'struggle' led to numerous suicides. Many innocent people suffered expulsion from their jobs, expulsion from school, imprisonment and even execution as the scope of political offences broadened to include the most trivial charges. The decade after 1966 was one of almost uninterrupted *jundong*. It was undoubtedly the most destructive and divisive period in the history of the PRC, and according to press reports is said by some Chinese to have led to the direct or indirect political victimization of as many as 100 million people.⁴

The Cultural Revolution was accompanied by an alarming decline in the norms of treatment of political offenders. Repression of political difference has a long history in the PRC, but many people who experienced repression in the past have reported that it was generally applied without vindictiveness, and in a spirit of reform.⁵ During the Cultural Revolution this changed as a result of the intensity of the factional confrontation, the ever growing number of 'deviants' uncovered and the lack of experience of newly recruited younger cadres. Cruelty, torture and even summary execution became not unknown, as even official sources now testify. So many deaths resulted from political maltreatment during this period that a new category of martyrs has been established to commemorate them.

The central strategic aim of the post-Mao leaders is to create the conditions for the overall modernization of the Chinese economy before the end of the century. As an integral part of this programme they have pledged to reform the political system, starting with the rehabilitation of innocent victims of political campaigns and going on to establish a regular legal system.

Deng Xiaoping and his supporters had succeeded in rehabilitating several hundred central government officials even before the fall of the 'Gang of Four' in late 1976. Since then tens of thousands of officials have returned to their posts at all levels of the administration. Rehabilitations and partial rehabilitations have not stopped short of some extremely controversial former Party leaders such as Chen Duxiu, Luo Zhanglong, Peng Dehuai, Wang Guangmei and, most recently, Liu Shaoqi. Most of them had clashed bitterly with Mao and other leaders before their downfall. Even veteran leaders of the Chinese Trotskyist movement like the 79-year-old Zheng Chaolin were freed in June 1979 after 27 years in prison, although there is no evidence that they have yet been officially rehabilitated.⁶

Campaign,' in *Inpracer*, Brussels, no. 10, 1974; and S. L. Greenblatt, 'Campaigns and the manufacture of deviance in Chinese society,' in Amy A. Wilson et. al., *Deviance and Social Control in Chinese Society*, New York, 1977.

⁴ AFP, quoted in *The China Quarterly*, no. 78, June 1979, p. 410. The significance of this figure, which is almost certainly exaggerated, is that many people in China are clearly prepared to accept that it is true.

⁵ See in particular Bao Ruowang and R. Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao*, Harmondsworth, 1976.

⁶ Zheng Chaolin was a founding member, alongside Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and others, of the famous French section of the CCP. He has spent 34 years of his life as a

The new government has launched a massive campaign to review the cases of millions of ordinary Chinese denounced, placed under supervision or imprisoned over the last twenty years, and has reportedly removed the label of 'class enemy' from all but a tiny handful of 'unreformed landlords, rich peasants, reactionary capitalists and other counter-revolutionaries'. In the past to be a member, or even the offspring of a member, of one of the old 'exploiting classes' was often in itself sufficient to attract the charge of counter-revolutionary. This new measure has potentially freed tens of millions of Chinese from guilt by inheritance.

Huge numbers of those denounced as 'rightists' and now rehabilitated were scientists and intellectuals whose skills can play a prominent role in economic and scientific modernization. Among leaders and cadres of the Communist Party the recent wave of political rehabilitations will meet with minimum resistance (except perhaps from that so-called 'helicopter class' which rose vertically from obscurity into top positions during the purges of the late 1960s). Over the past twenty years in China a political career has been fraught with constant danger, and no official could be sure that he or she would escape the next campaign. For such people the new moves are a welcome sign of a return to less destructive ways of regulating conflict in the government and the Party.

What of the losers in the power play of 1976? The strength of support for the programme of the Cultural Revolution group should not be overestimated. By 1976 this group had squandered much of its political base through purges, and its political proposals won it little backing in the wider society.⁷ According to Hua Guofeng not a shot was fired and not a drop of blood was spilt during the crushing of the 'Gang of Four' in October 1976 and 'there was no trouble at all, no major, medium, or even minor disturbances'. This picture is borne out in the main by other sources, although after October 1976 there were scattered reports of fighting in Fujian in Southeast China. This lack of resistance to the October coup is surprising if only because the Cultural Revolution group put much energy into building a mass base in the militia (which by 1976 was some 100 million strong) during its last years in power. The militia's failure to respond to the events of October 1976 is the surest sign of the isolation of the 'Gang of Four' from Chinese society. In 1977 and 1978 a small number of executions has been reported (carried out according to foreign eyewitnesses in a 'carnival-like' atmosphere) of 'unrepentant followers of the Gang who had struggled by force rather than by persuasion' and who were generally arraigned on criminal charges such as murder, and the call has gone out for the 'smashing of the Gang's bourgeois factional network'. Among those arrested and punished have been student leaders who first rose to prominence in the Cultural Revolution,

political prisoner, first as a 'dangerous revolutionary' under the Kuomintang and then as a 'counter-revolutionary' under the Communists. For more information on Zheng see my articles in *The Guardian*, London, 9 November 1977, and in *Inter-continental Press*, New York, vol. 17, no. 35, 1 October 1979.

⁷ See my article 'The factional struggle in the Chinese Communist Party' in *Critique: A Journal of Soviet Studies and Socialist Theory*, Glasgow, no. 8, summer 1977.

including some like Nie Yuanzi and Kuai Dafu who had already been purged once under the 'Gang'. These people have now disappeared into the prisons and labour camps. They are political prisoners and their present treatment is unconscionable, even though the regime that they supported imprisoned far more people than the present one, and often on far flimsier charges. Indications are that the emphasis in the campaign against 'Gang' supporters soon swung from struggle to education. The 1978 joint New Year's Day editorial called for a 'narrowing of the target' and added: 'Anyone who can be won over through education should not be pushed aside.'

In 1978 the Fifth National People's Congress adopted a new Constitution which included provisions for a new legal system. This move corresponded to a mood of deep popular dissatisfaction with the system of law as it had emerged from the Cultural Revolution. Turbulent mass campaigns and ad hoc mass surveillance units had taken over many of the functions of social control. Legal procedures were no longer strictly defined and sanctions other than those administered by the courts were applied to political offenders. The judicial system was closely supervised by the Party. Political trials were held largely *in camera*, except for a few show-trials staged as mass propaganda exercises.⁸

The new Constitution revived the procuratorate (which is responsible for reviewing cases, approving arrests and ensuring that all citizens and institutions—including Public Security—obey the law) and laid down procedures for the conduct of arrests and trials. The government announced a series of newly revised laws and the Party appeared to reassert the principle of judicial independence from the political authorities.

The new legal system is crucial for two main reasons to the success of Deng's government. First, a complex industrial economy of the sort that Deng envisages for China requires conditions of stability and regularity. In Deng's view systematic laws and regulations, and bodies for interpreting and protecting them, are the best guarantee of such conditions. This is certainly true if China is to attract foreign investment on a large scale. It was no accident that of the various laws announced in 1979 the only one to be put into immediate effect was that governing foreign investment. Second, the frequent pronouncements of the new leaders on socialist legality have roused expectations among ordinary Chinese of a truly independent judiciary, acting according to fixed and stated principles, from which they might seek protection against the arbitrary exercise of state power. Without such protection they will never 'say all they know and say it without reserve,' as Deng (following Mao) has urged them to do, just as local officials will never mend their ways or lay the basis for a modern administration based on rational standards unless there are effective legal checks on their behaviour.

The new leaders have insisted that without 'socialist democracy' there

⁸ For further details see the Amnesty International Report *Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China*, London, 1978.

can be no modernization. Socialist democracy is officially interpreted to mean the guaranteeing of democratic rights within the framework of overall Party control. Some relaxation is seen as an indispensable condition for 'emancipating the mind,' and thus for promoting scientific and technological progress. But its limits have been revealed in proposals to withdraw rights enshrined in the Constitution, such as that of putting up wall-posters, and in specific acts of repression.

The Chinese Communists have traditionally viewed democracy as a disposable instrument for achieving more basic goals such as the reinvigoration of the Party or an improvement in the economy, rather than as a positive end in itself. There are elements of similar thinking behind the present stress on political reform. But Deng Xiaoping and his supporters favour some measure of relaxation and legality not simply because it will assist the Four Modernizations. They also have strong personal reasons for opposing extreme forms of dictatorship. Between 1966 and 1976 many dozens of top leaders and hundreds of thousands of Communist officials personally suffered injustice, humiliation and physical maltreatment at the hands of their political enemies. They have no interest in repeating that experience. At the same time they have come under tremendous pressure from the Chinese masses, who have vociferously raised their own demands for more democracy.

In its formative period the CCP had little experience of democratic organization. Its internal life was extremely centralist as a result both of Stalinist influences and of the translation of military mores to the political field in a revolution that was predominantly military almost from the start. Such a heritage is not conducive to the flourishing of democratic forms. The present leaders have hard-won positions and material interests to defend. Why should they risk turbulence and contestation?

But many of the men and women who returned to office at national, provincial and local levels after Mao's death had fought for the revolution in the thirties and forties and had stubbornly resisted what they considered to be the excesses of the Maoists in the 1960s, at great personal risk to themselves and their families. Here the comparison with the Soviet Union after Stalin is instructive. Stalin destroyed the revolutionary leadership of the Bolshevik Party through repeated purges and assassinations. Those who came to power after his death were in the main career bureaucrats who had had no trouble in acting out the role of loyal Stalinists while the Great Leader was still alive. Mao, however, did not make a practice of executing his defeated rivals, so that after his death a whole layer of experienced leaders were able to return to office. These leaders are unlikely to question the ultimate foundations of their own rule, but some of them have been prepared to tolerate a certain rethinking of fundamental questions such as the relationship between democracy and socialism, and the fruits of this rethinking have appeared in the pages of the theoretical journals of the PRC.⁹ The few hundred activists in the unofficial movement could be

⁹ Among the more outspoken of the official journals was *Zhixin Yangxin* (*Studies in Philosophy*), which each month publishes up to 100 pp. of closely argued theoretical texts and has a circulation of nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ million. Arguments first advanced in such

eliminated tomorrow if they were not connected with hundreds of thousands of officials, managers, workers, teachers and others who represent the democratic tendency in the official world, and who are deeply questioning and doubting Maoist methods and values. The main threat to the trend towards political relaxation has been the possibility that China will permanently adopt a more aggressive military role on her Asian borders. Heightened military mobilization would inevitably express itself in China's domestic politics in terms of increasing secrecy, discipline and regimentation.

Treatment of Defeated Leaders in the CCP

Reports of a forthcoming show-trial of the 'Gang of Four' suggest ominous parallels with the Soviet Union under Stalin, and are at first sight in contradiction both with the CCP's traditional leniency towards its defeated leaders and with the present liberal mood in China. During the early rural phase of the revolution discredited leaders continued to occupy important positions in the Party even after their political defeat. This was partly because the lines they represented had been imposed on them from Moscow. They owed their positions largely to the Comintern's intervention and lacked stable differentiated constituencies in the Chinese movement, so that the leadership struggle rarely reached the same pitch of intensity as in the Soviet Union. But bloody purges were by no means unknown in the early period of the revolution. During the 1930 Futian Incident Mao Zedong killed large numbers of his political opponents. In 1934, on the eve of the Long March, the Party carried out a sustained and brutal purge of its members.¹⁰

By 1937 Mao had on his own confession come to regret the factional violence in Jiangxi, and Stalin's show-trials in the Soviet Union had shocked and sobered him.¹¹ During and after the Long March Mao had established a firm grip on the Party leadership, so that by the early 1940s he could afford to treat his defeated rival Wang Ming with some magnanimity. That Wang had returned to China from Moscow in late 1937 as Stalin's plenipotentiary naturally strengthened his immunity to retaliations by the Maoists. But there is no evidence to show that Mao's magnanimity extended to the toleration of genuine discussion in leading Party bodies in which his opponents could participate on equal terms. On the contrary, he and his supporters concentrated ever greater powers in their hands during the war against Japan, culminating in 1945 in the official inauguration of the Mao cult.¹²

Of the eleven 'line struggles' which orthodox Maoists have identified in

journals have been taken up and further developed by theoreticians of the unofficial movement.

¹⁰ Further references can be found in Patricia E. Griffin, *The Chinese Communist Treatment of Counter-revolutionaries, 1924-1949*, Princeton, 1976.

¹¹ Chang Kuo-t'ao reports Mao's comments in his *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1928-1938*, Kansas University Press, 1972, pp. 369-371.

¹² Where Communists of a truly independent outlook crossed Mao by challenging his views—for example Wang Shihwei, whose 1942 writings (see NLR 92) mark him out as the father of the Chinese democratic movement—they faced show trials and even execution.

Party history, five date from after 1949. An analysis of them shows first that, under the PRC, defeated leaders have no longer been allowed to continue to fulfil political functions, and second that the leadership struggle has been fought with increasing ruthlessness and violence, culminating in the ten-year imprisonment without trial and alleged torture of Wang Guangmei after 1966 and the violent death of Lin Biao, under circumstances which remain to be clarified and amid reports of moves towards a military confrontation, in 1971. In the context of this escalation of factionally inspired violence the proposed public trial of the 'Gang of Four' would in principle be an advance. There is a clear feeling among the Chinese public that the 'Gang' should be brought to public account. But unfortunately there is no chance that they will get a fair trial. All the standard smears have been made against them, including sexist smears against Jiang Qing and the slander against Zhang Chunqiao that he has been involved in 'counter-revolutionary activities for 40 years'. Hua Guofeng has stated that his government 'will not deal with the Gang of Four in the way they treated others. We will not sentence them to death'. One can only welcome his promise of leniency towards them. But it is a bad omen for the future of the legal system that he has not the slightest scruple about announcing their sentence in advance of their trial.

Since Mao's death there have been steps to rehabilitate no less than eight of the main losers in the eleven 'line struggles.' The role of Chen Duxiu as a major figure in the early history of the Party and as the author in 1919 of the slogan Science and Democracy (nowadays aptly transposed into Democracy and Science) has once again been recognized, although needless to say the reversal of the verdict on him does not extend to the period of his conversion to Trotskyism. The veteran revolutionary Luo Zhanglong, who clashed with Mao in the early 1930s and tried to set up a rival Central Committee, has been appointed to advise on Party history. Peng Dehuai, who criticised the Great Leap Forward (and by implication Mao) in 1959, has been posthumously praised. Wang Guangmei has been appointed to a leading council of the state. These and other rehabilitations imply that the present leaders reject the theory of an eternal struggle between the 'correct' and the 'incorrect' line, and have decided to develop a more collective and democratic style of leadership.

Protest and Dissent

In China, unlike in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the majority of dissidents are workers, although the unofficial groups have also recruited a small number of teachers and students. They identify with the workers and peasants' cause and vehemently reject all forms of elitism.

There are special factors in the structure of Chinese society that help to explain the predominantly worker background of the Chinese dissident movement. China is an economically backward country in which the proletariat makes up only a small minority of the total population. Over the past ten years in particular many millions of town-dwellers and educated youth have been transferred to the villages

as part of the *xiafang* or 'Down to the countryside' movement, sometimes as a punishment for political activities but more often as part of a massive campaign to reduce the growing population pressure on the cities. Those who stayed behind are a comparatively privileged minority. Factory work in China has high social status, and press reports show that it is not uncommon for cadres to seek 'backdoor entry' to factory jobs for their children, particularly when much formal education ceased for several years as a result of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore proportionately more young people well informed through family connections about political struggles at the highest level are employed in urban industry in China than is the case in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is partly from among these offspring of influential Party officials and army officers that leaders of the democratic movement (for example Xu Wenli of *April Fifth Forum*) are drawn. Others, like Yang Guang of the journal *Exploration*, are the children of foreign-educated scientists and technologists. (Yang Guang testified in favour of the prosecution at the recent trial of his old political co-thinker Wei Jingsheng, according to *People's Daily*, after 'patient education by security personnel'.) On the original social background of the broader movement it is impossible to comment with any degree of confidence, although foreign press reports claim that young workers and returned *xiafang* youth predominate in it. Even democratic movement activists from well-off backgrounds are said to distance themselves from their origins and to affect patched clothes of coarse peasant-style cloth.

The majority of Chinese democratic movement activists are in their thirties, and the Cultural Revolution had a formative influence on their lives. This influence was by no means entirely negative. In analyzing the Cultural Revolution it is necessary to draw a distinction between the spontaneously anti-bureaucratic impulses that initially inspired it and its later bureaucratic manipulation from above. Wei Jingsheng, the recently gaoled dissident leader, also maintains this distinction. He wrote for example that it is wrong to refer to the Cultural Revolution 'as having started from the encouragement (from above) of Red Guards to rebel. I joined the Red Guards (in April 1966). I know exactly why they rebelled—not because Mao encouraged them, but because they were indignant at seeing all the inequalities and irregularities in society and in school. That Mao later used them by giving them full support so as to achieve his personal aims is another story.'¹³

The Cultural Revolution taught the Red Guards the value of 'linking up to exchange revolutionary experiences'—a lesson which today's democratic movement has put to good effect. It initiated them in the techniques of mimeography and primitive publishing. It created a political culture in which 'it is justified to rebel' and to contest authority, although in the long run Party leaders manipulated this rebellion to their own narrow advantage. With the schools and universities shut down, some independent-minded Red Guard leaders began to think through questions for themselves, and graduated from the simple

¹³ The article from which this passage is drawn is extracted by Melinda Lu in *PRM*, 2 November 1979.

catechisms of the Little Red Book to more complex theoretical problems and to the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. In September 1967 Jiang Qing, a main leader of the Cultural Revolution group, announced a clampdown on the Red Guard movement. Subsequently many of its leaders were branded as criminals and punished with rustication, imprisonment and even execution. The betrayed youths reacted in various ways to this experience. Some retreated into cynicism or apathy. Others cultivated a melancholic romanticism best exemplified by the currently popular 'new wave' literature or 'literature of the wounded,'¹⁴ with its themes of tragedy, betrayal and sacrifice. But a minority of activists persisted with the political critique of bureaucracy that they had begun during the Cultural Revolution, although they now concentrated their energies at the theoretical rather than at the practical level. This critique combined elements from many sources, not excluding criticisms and proposals originally raised by the Mao group. It was mainly on the basis of this critique that the present democratic movement formed.

Returned *xiafang* youth are a second category of protesters in the Chinese cities. The conditions of the millions of young people transferred to the villages are often harsh, and many of them believe that the procedures by which they were selected for rustication were arbitrary or discriminative. Since the fall of the 'Gang of Four' the government has taken limited steps to improve the conditions of *xiafang* youth and has even allowed some to return home. The effect has been to set in motion a mass influx of such youth into Beijing, Shanghai and other cities, where they petition for relocation to urban areas. This is known popularly as the *shangfang* or 'Up to petition' movement. In many cities these petitioners have staged big demonstrations and even rioted. These youth are joined in the cities by peasants who have come to demand redress of wrongs committed against them by officials or a reversal of verdicts passed against them during the Cultural Revolution. According to a Beijing wall-poster written by one Zhang Xifeng, an agricultural worker from Shanxi, at one point there were 100,000 such *shangfang* 'refugees' sleeping out in the streets of the capital and reduced to begging, theft and prostitution. Zhang writes that these people are harassed, beaten and occasionally rounded up and interned by the city authorities.¹⁵ The peasant *shangfang* petitioners mostly lack the political sophistication to articulate their discontent and, above all, lack organization.

The democratic movement activists in China are under no illusion about their strength. They frankly recognize that they owe their freedom to publish and organize solely to the benign paternalism of a section of the Party leadership. The main factor behind the downfall of the 'Gang of Four' was the mass movement that broke out in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and in other cities of China in April 1976. Forces now represented by the democratic movement were an important constituent of April Fifth. But for the time being the broader social and political layers represented in that movement have withdrawn from

¹⁴ Discussed by Bennett Lee in his introduction to Lu Xinhua et al., *The Wounded. New Stories of the Cultural Revolution*, '77-'78, London: Guanhwa Company, 1979.

¹⁵ Zhang Xifeng's wall-poster is quoted in *REX*, 19 October 1979.

active political roles and are prepared to entrust the affairs of state to the new government. Some see the latter as a direct outcome and a guarantee of the 1976 political ferment. Others support Deng because the present alternatives look worse, and because they fear to rock the boat when it is changing course and all sorts of perils, especially economic ones, lie ahead. Nor should one conclude from the fact that most dissidents are workers that the democratic movement has a proletarian base. The movement's activists are entirely exceptional in their level of culture and political understanding, and there is no evidence that their colleagues and work-mates identify with them in large numbers (although many certainly passively sympathize with them to varying degrees).

The print-run of most unofficial publications rarely exceeds a few hundred. The journal *Mass Reference News* is reported to print 20,000 copies per issue, but if true this is exceptional. The 700-foot long Democracy Wall in the Xidan district of Beijing attracted wide publicity. But wall-posters had many drawbacks from the point of view of democratic movement activists. They preferred to publish their ideas in mimeographed journals, through which they could express themselves at greater length and disseminate their thoughts more widely, including in cities other than Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and if necessary more discreetly (although in Beijing itself the best way to get such journals read was by pasting them up as wall-posters). The authorities permitted big-character posters and Democratic Walls for a time because they are more visible and thus easier to control. They always refused to approve requests for official recognition from democratic movement publications, the legal status of which therefore remained vulnerable (although the Constitution in theory guarantees freedom of the press). Publishers of unofficial journals have great difficulty in acquiring paper and printing ink, and in getting access to duplicating facilities.

Rather deep political differences divide some of the main dissident groups, but this has not stopped them from linking up to protest against arrests of activists or from maintaining contact with groups throughout China for the purposes of discussion. For as long as they fail to establish firm links to broader social bases their main strength will continue to lie in their mutual solidarity, their courage and their spirit of self-sacrifice.

Over the past year the articulate but numerically weak democratic movement has sought to establish precisely such links with the numerous but mainly unorganized *shangfang* petitioners. The authorities are in no position to put a quick end to the political and social grievances of the *shangfang* masses. Not only are there too many of them, but their problems mainly originate at local level, to which the new liberal norms have often barely penetrated. The Beijing authorities have tried to deal with them by ordering them to take their grievances back to local level. But as the agricultural worker Zhang commented in his wall-poster: 'What sense does it make to hand over a petition to the very person who is being accused of misdeeds?'

Among the notices posted on Democracy Wall were many written by peasants expressing personal grievances. Dissidents have incorporated such notices into their publications in order to give them a wider airing, and as illustrations of bureaucratic tyranny or social injustice. Some activists have organized and led demonstrations of poor peasants and other petitioners in front of the government buildings at Zhongnanhai.

The best known case is that of Fu Yuehua, a municipal worker in Beijing who was arrested sometime in early 1979. At her trial in October she put up such a spirited performance that her audience, hand-picked in advance, several times interrupted the proceedings to applaud her. When the judge accused her of having led a demonstration on the grounds that she had marched in front of it she replied: 'If I had been in the back you would have said that I controlled it from behind a screen and if I was in the middle you would have said that I was in the mainstream.' Fu Yuehua is also charged with having falsely accused her former Party boss of raping her. According to her family this rape caused her to have a mental breakdown as a result of which she lost her job. This second charge against Fu is undoubtedly a sexist smear, as Fu proved in court by describing the body of her attacker in intimate detail. Fu's trial was adjourned without explanation, probably because the prosecution felt undermined by her determined defence and by the incredulous reactions of the spectators. The Beijing court waited more than two months before announcing that she had been sentenced to two years in gaol for 'violating public order'.

In post-Mao China wronged and aggrieved citizens are a class numbering many millions. If democratic movement activists succeed in giving them shape and direction they could become a new and convulsive force in Chinese politics, and destroy the narrow framework within which the Party leaders are trying to hold the remaining moves of liberalization. But the Party leaders are not unaware of that danger. It was for that very reason that Fu Yuehua—a woman said to have a 'natural empathy for the poor'¹⁶ and a saint-like spirit of self-sacrifice—was singled out for a show trial alongside the dissident leader Wei Jingsheng.

To complete this picture of the sources of protest and dissent in contemporary China I will briefly mention two other groups: the students and the cultural non-conformists.

Students were the main force in the Red Guard movement of the Cultural Revolution. In the years following the reopening of the universities in the early 1970s students were educated according to the norms and standards of the Mao group, and after 1976 were poorly suited to the goals of the new pragmatic leaders, with their emphasis on scientific and technical specialization. These students displayed no great enthusiasm for the programme of the new government, although there is little evidence that they actually opposed the changes at the top after Mao's death. As for the classes of students recruited since 1976,

¹⁶ John Fraser's description of Fu in *Christian Science Monitor*, *World International Edition*, 22 October 1979. Fraser saw Fu in action on two separate occasions.

most can be expected to identify with the goals of the new leaders, particularly since they are destined to play a special role in the achievement of those goals. It is therefore not entirely surprising that students have not so far played a prominent role in the current political struggles and debates. But there are already signs that this is beginning to change. In October 1979 several thousand Beijing students staged a strike and demonstration against the continuing occupation of parts of their campus by an army artillery unit which first moved onto it during the Cultural Revolution. The students raised slogans which went well beyond the specific issue at hand. They called for an end to 'special privileges' for the army and declared that 'The university is not a barracks.' In November there were western press reports that a student leader who helped organize the strike had been expelled and that the soldiers had still not moved.

Cultural non-conformism is an indispensable part of the present political ferment in China. Under the 'Gang of Four' cultural life was run almost entirely by bureaucrats, and it was correspondingly bleak, drab and soulless. The Beijing journal *Enlightenment* paints a gruesome picture of cultural and spiritual repression after the Cultural Revolution: '... in this mental war, people became physically tense to the point of convulsion. . . Their mouths lost the social function of exchanging ideas and feelings and became a mere orifice for taking in food and breathing air. . . The painter's canvas turned to rags and the paint solidified. In this horrible and cruel war ballet dancers' legs were crippled, violinists lost their fingers, vocalists dared not open their mouths, young girls did not visit stores to buy colourful materials for making skirts, and lovers did not dare walk in pairs.'¹⁷ Since 1976 the new government has considerably relaxed its cultural policy. The little freedoms—dark glasses, bellbottom trousers, women with permed and even tinted hair—are evident on the Chinese streets. Many unofficial groups are deeply involved in experimentation with new literary and artistic forms, and most unofficial journals print poems and short stories alongside their political statements and reports. Painters in Beijing staged a happening under the daring slogan 'Celebrate in disorder the end to disorder' and mounted an exhibition of 'degenerate' paintings which was broken up by the police. In October 1979 hundreds of poets met in public to express their support for the gaoled leader Wei Jingsheng. Despite some recent evidence of a renewed clampdown by the authorities, many cultural leaders clearly approve of this blossoming of new forms. 'New wave literature' is regularly published in official literary journals. Curators of the Museum of Arts took paintings from the unofficial art exhibition into safe keeping during the police action against the dissident painters.

Unofficial journals have also begun to take an interest in environmental issues, and have protested against smog pollution in Beijing and the pulling down of 'historical landmarks and cultural objects.'

Finally, calls for freer sexual relations were reported from Democracy Wall. In the past, PRC governments have followed a policy of

¹⁷ *Enlightenment (Qingming)* no. 2, 24 November 1979 (JPRS 73215).

rather severe sexual repression, mainly on the grounds that in China sexual freedom would lead in practice to the exploitation of women. After the Cultural Revolution the increasing regimentation of the population and the tendency for some husbands and wives to be assigned to work in different parts of China added to the air of sexual puritanism. In the current more relaxed mood it is likely that themes of sexual liberation will become more prominent among non-conformist youth.

'Li Yi Zhe'

In the following section I will introduce three of the more prominent democratic movement groups, and outline some of their views and beliefs.

The Li Yi Zhe group is so called after the ex-Red Guard leaders Li Zhengtian, Chen Yiyang and Wang Xizhe, who, together with a fourth person, displayed a controversial wall-poster in Guangzhou in 1974.¹⁸ This poster, which circulated throughout China in mimeographed form, deepened the themes of the official campaign to criticize Lin Biao into a call for the overthrow of the entire system of which Lin Biao was a mere symptom. It made veiled attacks on Jiang Qing and her supporters (the 'Gang of Four'), and called for socialist democracy, a socialist legal system and protection of the people's revolutionary and human rights. For a while the authors of this poster were able to escape outright repression because they enjoyed the protection of co-thinkers of Deng Xiaoping in the Guangdong provincial leadership. But although they were not imprisoned, they were subjected to a campaign of intense criticism and eventually placed under 'mass surveillance'. It was not until March 1977, several months after the October coup, that they were formally charged. With supreme irony they were accused of being followers of the 'Gang', as well as of having links with Taiwan and with the Trotskyists in Hongkong. Under the 'Gang' they were labelled merely as 'reactionaries'; now they were charged with being 'counter-revolutionaries.' After their trial they ended up in labour camps. At least one of their number (Li Zhengtian) is known to have been sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1978 the unofficial press in China began a campaign for Li Yi Zhe's release, and Amnesty International adopted the three as Prisoners of Conscience. Also in 1978 the new Constitution was promulgated, embodying many of the proposals made by Li Yi Zhe while the 'Gang of Four' was still at its peak. But it was not until February of the following year that the three were finally released and rehabilitated. Their arrest and imprisonment in 1977 were almost certainly on provincial rather than on national initiative. In early 1979 the Guangdong provincial authorities carried out self-criticism on account of their handling of the Li Yi Zhe group. The events surrounding this case are a good illustration of the problems facing the central leaders in their efforts to push through a more liberal policy in the teeth of opposition at lower levels of the administration.

¹⁸ See Appendix V to the Amnesty International Report; *Beijing Spring* (Beijing *zhishi*) no. 2, 27 January 1979 (PRS 73728); and Peter Schler, 'Der Fall Li Yi Zhe,' in *China aktuell*, Hamburg, April 1979.

Since their release these veterans of the democratic movement have continued to engage in independent theoretical research. One of them, Wang Xizhe, has published his views, which he describes as a further refinement of the 1974 poster, in the Guangzhou unofficial journal *Voice of the People* under the title 'Struggle for the class dictatorship of the proletariat.'¹⁹ This impressive document develops a sustained, and theoretically original, critique of post-capitalist society. Its argument can be summarized as follows: After the proletariat has seized power in an economically backward country it is confronted with two choices. Either it can close its doors to the outside world and retreat into a regime of 'feudal socialism'; or it can enter the world system and become a 'large-scale cooperative factory'—a 'bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie'—producing goods for a capitalist-dominated world market. Given the huge size of this 'cooperative factory' and the workers' low cultural level, the administration of the economy is carried out not by the workers but by their vanguard, organized in the Communist Party. There are two possible courses along which such a state can subsequently evolve. Either the workers' cultural level will rise so that they can gradually be drawn into the tasks of state administration; or the workers' vanguard will 'become alienated into something opposed to the proletariat,' i.e. a dictatorship of 'Communist bureaucrats'. The social basis for such a dictatorship still exists in China. The Four were a product of social conditions and not the cause of them.

Wang shares in common with other dissident theoreticians and with student leaders of the 1957 Hundred Flowers period a naively idealized picture of Yugoslavia. But what is fresh and original about his analysis is that it discusses the relationship between socialism, democracy and dictatorship within the broader world context. It concludes that 'socialism is not realizable in isolation, especially not in an economically backward country.'

In spite of his radical theoretical innovations, Wang belongs to the moderate wing of the democracy movement where questions of day-to-day political work are concerned. He continued to describe Deng Xiaoping as a 'great proletarian revolutionary' even after the latter had criticized the dissidents in March 1979. He also said: 'Some people are carrying out the democratic movement too hastily. Some restrictions must be placed on their words and deeds. However, this is not the main tendency. The main tendency is that conservative forces inside the Party are currently adopting various measures that suppress the people's democracy.'²⁰

'Beijing Spring'

This journal is fairly typical of a current in the democratic movement that strongly reflects the positions of the liberalizing faction in the Party leadership. Its declared political position is that it 'takes Marxism—

¹⁹ *People's Voice* (*Renmin zhi sheng*) no. 8, July 1979. This article was reprinted in the Hongkong left-wing journal *Qidongdai* (*Seven Stars Monthly*), and an English translation appears in NLB 121.

²⁰ Quoted in *Dongxiang* (*Trends*), Hongkong, 16 April 1979 (JPRS 73381).

Leninism as the guide, supports the CCP, adheres to the socialist path, and follows Mao Zedong's policy of a hundred flowers blossoming and a hundred schools of thought contending.²¹ It carried numerous articles criticizing the old guard in the Party, praising newly rehabilitated leaders and pressing for a review of the case of Liu Shaoqi, Deng's main co-thinker in the Party in the early 1960s. At least until the crackdown of late 1979 its role was similar in some ways to that of the pro-Deng left-wing press in Hongkong. It acted as an outrider for the Deng group, at a time when that group wished to extend further the measures of relaxation.

Like other unofficial journals, *Beijing Spring* offers detailed proposals for the adjustment of the political system in the direction of greater democracy. These proposals are phrased in radical Marxist terms, but in reality they are simply a restatement of the positions of the liberalizing faction in the leadership. For example, it proposes the Paris Commune as a model for democracy, but goes on to argue that the two main features of the commune system—replacement of the standing army by a militia, and replacement of bureaucracy by democracy—are inappropriate in China at present because of the existence of imperialism. If the commune were immediately established, it would lead to anarchy. Under Hua Guofeng's leadership, however, it will be possible to abolish the present system in a gradual way, while guarding against interference from 'left' ultrademocratic tendencies. The first step would be to call for the democratic election of workers' committees in 'grass-roots' units of industry and for an end to direct Party leadership over them (while retaining Party leadership at middle and upper levels).²² But this proposal was first made by Deng in a speech to the Ninth China Trade Union Congress in late 1978. Deng's main concern was economic rather than political: to eliminate 'the present widespread phenomenon of no one accepting responsibility and organizing production in a normal and orderly fashion'.

Thus *Beijing Spring* has acted not so much as a journal of dissent as an extra-Party vehicle for the views of the Deng faction in the Party leadership, although it presents those views in libertarian Marxist terms and seems to be accepted as part of the democratic movement. After the back-tracking of October and November 1979, however, it adopted positions critical of the Party leaders.

'Exploration'

Exploration, or *Tansuo*, is the journal which the dissident leader Wei Jingsheng edited until his arrest in late March 1979. Like most other activists, Wei has a background in the Red Guards. He was a soldier between 1969 and 1973, after which he worked at Beijing Zoo as an electrician. Wei's basic contention is that 'the hated old political system has not changed' despite the change of leaders. The most comprehensive statement of his political and philosophical views is his 'The Fifth Modernization—Democracy,' published in *Exploration* nos.

²¹ *Beijing Spring* no. 1, 9 January 1978 (JPRS 73728).

²² *Beijing Spring* nos. 1 and 2, 9 and 27 January 1979 (JPRS 73421).

Wei's basic criticism of the PRC system is that it is a form of totalitarianism which 'regards suppression of individuality as its basic condition of survival.' Such a system is essentially unnatural since 'people's individuality enjoys priority over their sociality, although both individuality and sociality are important constituents of human nature.' A system which suppresses individuality cannot therefore be truly collective. In it individuality and collectivism take the monstrous form of 'autocratic individualism and small group mentality.' According to Wei the source of socialist totalitarianism is the philosophy of Marx, which is a 'direct inheritance from feudal philosophy at its peak—Classical German Philosophy.' The most complete embodiment of democracy, understood in the sense of individuality harmonized into society, is western bourgeois democracy. The United States in particular is the best proof that 'democracy has always brought along with it the most favourable conditions for social development'.

Like Wang Xizhe, Wei sees the way out for China in a Yugoslavia-type system of people's management. Wei views Marxism as a main source of the 'poisoning' of China. But he still believes in socialism, which he sees as 'essentially inclined towards democracy'. He seeks his inspiration from pre-socialist movements which he considers were 'linked with democratic movements and directly concerned with people's quest for happiness'.

Wei Jingsheng is the most right-wing of the better-known democratic movement activists. Few other dissidents share his views on Marxism, although more share his views on bourgeois democracy. Even Wei's successor as acting editor of *Exploration*, Lu Lin, appears to favour a return to the 'sources of genuine Marxism, or Marxism itself,' although Lu too rejects what he sees as the 'false Marxism of Mao.'²⁴ On bourgeois democracy, it is not uncommon to find the most effusive adulation of the United States in democratic movement publications, although more balanced views have appeared in some journals.²⁵ Years of isolation from the rest of the world have led to a situation in which even many highly educated and politically aware Chinese have a very undifferentiated view of western bourgeois society, and no real understanding of its inequalities of wealth and power. With the exception of Wang Xizhe few contributors to the unofficial press seem interested in analysing the nature of imperialism as a world system.

The Turn to Repression

The signal for the first main clampdown on the democratic movement was a speech by Deng Xiaoping on 16 March 1979 setting narrower limits to the political ferment. Deng's speech was followed by warnings in the press and by public notices forbidding disturbances and 'counter-revolutionary activities.' On 25 March a special edition of *Exploration*

²³ JPRS 73756 and 73787.

²⁴ Quoted by Jos Schneider in *De Haags Post*, 27 October 1979.

²⁵ See for example the article 'America is no haven of liberty either' quoted from *April Fifth Forum* by Helmut Opletal in *FEEN*, 7 September 1979.

appeared on the streets criticizing Deng for wanting to suppress the democratic movement and calling for vigilance in the face of his 'metamorphosis into a dictator.'²⁶ A few days later a number of dissident leaders were arrested, among them *Exploration's* editor Wei Jingsheng. It was at this point that the Party promulgated its 'four fundamental principles' as a basis for maintaining social order: adherence to the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. The western press has understandably focussed on the more visible victims of this repression. But there are reliable reports that the net was cast rather widely, with as many as 2,000 arrests in Beijing and Shanghai.²⁷ One reason for the timing of this clampdown was the military situation on the border with Vietnam. The ferment among *shangfang* petitioners in Beijing and the growing boldness of the democratic movement threatened to combine in a new wave of unrest and disorder. This was the eve of April Fifth. Mass disturbances in Tiananmen Square on the anniversary of the 1976 demonstrations would have made nonsense of the Chinese leaders' efforts to portray the image of a nation united behind its army.

The effect of Deng's speech and the subsequent arrests was to dampen down the democratic movement. It was not for some time that big-character posters reappeared on the walls in significant numbers, and not until May and June that the unofficial journals returned to the streets. This second blossoming of the democratic movement more or less coincided with Ye Jianying's thirtieth anniversary speech attacking the Cultural Revolution and with the further strengthening of Deng Xiaoping's position in the Politburo by the return of Peng Zhen and others to positions of major influence.

In September and early October the streets of Beijing and other cities again echoed to the shouting of slogans as students, peasants, workers, unemployed and *xiafang* youth once more took to the streets to ventilate their grievances. On 16 October the trial of Wei Jingsheng took place. This was the prelude to a renewed crackdown on sections of the protest movement, although it is not yet clear whether this crackdown will extend to the movement as a whole. Wei was sentenced to 15 years in prison on the charge that, in the wake of China's invasion of Vietnam, he 'supplied a foreigner with military intelligence, . . . wrote and distributed articles slandering Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and agitated for the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system and the seizure of state power.' It seems possible, from the timing and content of the charges against Wei, that the move against him was designed to intimidate critics of the attack on Vietnam.

Wei's sentencing was soon followed by further arrests and a renewed official stress on the 'class character' of democracy and the legal system. There is no reason to think that Deng did not fully approve of this new direction in official policy. Around the time of Wei's trial Deng

²⁶ *JPRS* 73421.

²⁷ L. Fanchelieu and W. Zafanollu in *Le Monde*, 13 October 1979.

told a visiting delegation of us state governors that Democracy Wall, the sit-ins and the demonstrations 'cannot represent the genuine feeling of our people.' During the period of the crackdown Hua Guofeng was away in Europe, and Deng was appointed acting premier. His influence in the leadership was stronger than ever before as a result of the political defeat and relegation of the old guard around Wang Dongxing.

Early in December the state authorities announced that all future wall-posters must be registered and signed, and that authors of them must not 'reveal state secrets or engage in other illegal activities'—concepts which, despite the new legal code, remain notoriously elastic. At the same time they ordered the removal of Democracy Wall from the centre of Beijing, where hundreds of thousands of people walked, rode or drove past it daily, to an out-of-the-way suburban park. In Changsha, Wuhan, Tianjin and Guangzhou the public distribution of some unofficial journals was officially prohibited. (On this point see the joint declaration of three Guangzhou journals calling on democratic movement activists throughout China to wage a unified struggle for the right of all 'popular publications' to official licensing; this declaration was translated in the French newspaper *Le Matin*, 6 February, 1980).

Prospects for the Democracy Movement

As China enters the 1980s, what will be the fate of her dissident movement? A comparison with past unofficial movements in China will shed some light on the strengths and weaknesses of the present-day Chinese dissidents. On three main previous occasions in their history, in 1942, 1957 and 1966, CCP leaders have deliberately stirred up criticism from below. These movements of mass criticism, especially those of 1942 and 1957, have important features in common although there are also many differences between them. However, insofar as they represent a common tradition of independent thought, it is one which shows little evidence of internal development, probably because the official monopoly on information in the PRC raises insuperable barriers to the transmission of unorthodox ideologies. The course of these criticism movements is tragically predictable: first Party leaders encourage people to speak out; sooner or later this criticism spills over the set limits; the Party leaders then reassert control by repressing the critics; the relaxation is abruptly terminated; and the themes of criticism lie dormant until the next round of 'blossoming and contending'.

There are many similarities between the present movement and the Hundred Flowers campaign of 1957. Indeed the parallels between the two periods are even officially recognized. The repression of the Hundred Flowers has been widely described in the official press as the beginning of the 'left' tendency and of China's troubles, and victims of the 1957 clampdown have not only been rehabilitated in their tens of thousands but are today saying some of the same things they said before their arrest twenty years ago. But there are also important differences in the nature of the two movements and in the context in which each has operated. In 1957 all sections of the Party were united behind their

historic leader, Mao. The Party had stabilized its position and succeeded in first rehabilitating and then radically restructuring the Chinese economy. Today the combined effects of age and repeated power struggles have led to the shedding of many old leaders, and China's economy and society have barely emerged from a period of debilitating chaos. In 1957 Mao launched the Hundred Flowers as it were by choice, mainly in order to curb bureaucratic conservatism in the Party and forestall the development of a breach between it and the people of the sort that had so alarmed him in the case of Hungary in 1956. The forces he mobilized were students and older intellectuals newly emerged from the furnace of thought reform. Today the democratic movement has developed largely independently, over a long period of ideological ferment and experimentation. It is made up mainly of young workers hardened by years of personal privation and political struggle. It shares some notions with the students of 1957, but on the whole its programmes have greater theoretical depth and articulation than those of the former and are socialist rather than (as in 1957) liberal in inspiration.

The comparison with the Cultural Revolution is also instructive. In 1966 the Party leadership was badly split. The student youth who formed the mass base of the Cultural Revolution lacked experience of political organization and were easy prey for manipulation by sophisticated political leaders. The rival factions in the Party hierarchy vied with each other to recruit support from among the Red Guards, most of whom lost sight of substantive political issues and became hopelessly and even pathologically embroiled in factionalism. Today some dissident organizations are open to pressure by Deng Xiaoping, but most are basically independent. They have succeeded in avoiding a gross personalization of their politics despite the stridently personalized official campaign against the Gang of Four. Dissident theoreticians have emphatically insisted that one should look not at the shortcomings of this or that individual leader, but at the social system that underlies them.

The two great planks on which the present leaders were hoisted into power are modernization and socialist democracy. It is out of the question that they would risk alienating their mass support by backtracking entirely on their promises of reform. Yet, as the events of recent months show only too clearly, the Party leaders are not prepared to tolerate the bolder forms of independent political organization advocated by the democratic movement, or to open up the system to the fresh gusts of mass-based dissent. Deng's goal appears to be the creation of a comparatively well-ordered society in which 'democracy' would be carefully modulated to reinforce and stabilize the regime. The current, sponsored revival of the handful of docile 'democratic parties' which have supported the government uncritically since 1949 is entirely compatible with Deng's project. The further growth of a non-conformist and increasingly articulate democratic movement is not. The most likely scenario, therefore, is for a continuation of selective repression against dissidents. By driving the democratic movement underground, however, repression might actually strengthen its coherence and force it to deepen its roots in the peasantry and working class. This is the risk which Deng is taking.

Marxism and the 'Welfare State'

Elizabeth Wilson

*The Political Economy of the Welfare State*¹ by Ian Gough is the third book to appear in a series of educational texts, 'Critical Texts in Social Work and the Welfare State', edited by Professor Peter Leonard. The series is located by Peter Leonard within the 'crisis' and its aim is: 'to address itself to explanations of the crisis which relate to the immediate material reality experienced by State workers in the welfare field and to link this to the economic, political, ideological and historical context within which the crisis occurs'.² In his general introduction, Peter Leonard places an emphasis on the relationship of theory and practice, but within this scheme Ian Gough's book is necessarily primarily theoretical. It is intended both as an account of the political economy of welfare and as a contribution to the Marxist debate concerning the nature of the capitalist state, a debate that has been engaged at a high level of theoretical sophistication for some years—in fact since the by now celebrated contributions by Ralph Miliband and the late Nicos Poulantzas which appeared originally in the *New Left Review*.³ Both Ian Gough's book and the series of which it is part—a series intended for students and for practitioners rather than for Marxist theoreticians—raise particular issues with which I as a teacher of social work students am concerned. They also raise more general issues to do with the relationship of the economic, the political and the ideological; and to do with the general response of the left to the advent of the Thatcher government.

The Contradictions of 'Welfare'

Ian Gough's book sets out to explain the 'welfare state' by means of Marxist political economy. This entails outlining both what Marxist economics is and the nature of the 'welfare state', since Gough's task is to bring Marxist theory to bear on the elaborate edifice of social policy, fiscal arrangements, state intervention and ideology which combine to constitute what we know as the 'welfare state'. The phrase 'welfare state' is itself a highly ideological, journalistic coinage, originally invented, it is believed, to be contrasted with the 'warfare state' of Nazi Germany.⁴ As Gough acknowledges:⁵ 'The very term 'the welfare state' reveals the ideological nature of most writing about it. Put another way, the object of our study is defined in terms of a theoret-

¹ Ian Gough, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*, London 1979, Macmillan.

² Paul Corrigan and Peter Leonard, *Social Work Practice Under Capitalism, A Marxist Approach*, London 1978, General Introduction, p. ix.

³ These were republished in Robin Blackburn, *Ideology in Social Science*, London 1972.

⁴ Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State*, London 1968.

⁵ Gough, p. 3.

ical tradition which we reject. Nevertheless, the phrase has entered our language and for the moment we must continue to use it'.

Gough organizes his book round what he perceives as the two major contradictions within state welfare provision in capitalist societies (the book explicitly does not deal with socialist or with underdeveloped countries). The first of these contradictions is the simultaneous tendency for welfare provision to be both progressive and coercive; it does provide needed services, yet these may come in authoritarian forms and contain coercive elements; secondly: 'the very scale of state expenditure on the social services has become a fetter on the process of capital accumulation and economic growth itself'. State expenditure on welfare supports capitalism yet simultaneously hinders it.

The opening chapters of the book constitute a careful exposition of the contradictory nature of the welfare state. Gough contrasts his own, Marxist, perspective, with the Fabian and functionalist explanations and accounts that have dominated the field of social policy and administration and points out how they tend either to stress the organismic and functionalist aspects of state provision (which responds to the 'needs' of capitalism) or to stress the subjective factors of personal choice, and pluralism. He then moves back in order to give a clear and accessible account of the Marxist approach to the capitalist economy, explaining what it says and what it claims to explain. In doing this he incorporates a necessarily condensed summary of the historical development of welfare provision in relation to the development of capitalism (the Factory Acts, the growth of public education and so on), and he makes passing reference to the role of ideology. He also sketches out briefly the historical divorce between bourgeois economics and bourgeois sociology and explains how Marxism overcomes this separation by rejoining the economic and the social that have been unnaturally divided in these disciplines. In other words, as Gough himself acknowledges, the scope of the book is 'inevitably extremely broad'.

Having explained the Marxist method and approach, Gough then proceeds to an account of the state in capitalist society and of the way in which political freedom creates the conditions in which exploitation can take place (itself a highly contradictory state of affairs). Having located welfare provision within this modern capitalist state, Gough is able to provide his own definition of the welfare state: 'for the purposes of this work we shall characterize the welfare state as the use of state power to modify the reproduction of labour power and to maintain the non-working population in capitalist societies'.⁶ For Gough, therefore, the welfare state is engaged in two actually separate or at least separable activities (although these are given a spurious unity since the distribution of the wage on which they immediately depend takes place within the family—an aspect of welfarism not discussed by him); these are the reproduction of the daily and of the generational labour force, and the redistribution of money goods and services to the non-working sections of the population (children, the old and the sick or otherwise

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

disabled, as well as the currently unemployed and often housewives, they represent a majority of individuals). Gough then turns to the development of welfare state provision in modern capitalist societies and describes the unique combination of the meshing of the class struggle for 'welfare' goods and services with the centralization and growth of the power of the modern capitalist state. Then, following a clear account of the expansion of social expenditure—an account of how the welfare state is financed, what is financed and why it has expanded so greatly—Gough turns to the effect of this on the capitalist economy. Here, as in the account of the state, Gough discusses in an appendix the more difficult aspects of the debate amongst Marxist economists attempting to answer the questions: has the growth of welfare expenditure benefitted or harmed the capitalist economy; and has it promoted or fettered profitability and the accumulation of capital?

Finally, Gough returns to the current economic crisis and his book ends with an account of the reasons for the development of this crisis and an assessment of its likely consequences for the welfare state, suggesting that this is likely to be 'restructured' rather than 'dis-mantled'; he also points out the fresh contradictions to which attempts to cut back welfare spending give rise since they are often harmful to industry (e.g. demand for consumer goods is cut back) and fail to cure the problems for which they were perceived as being the remedy. Lastly, in a brief 'political postscript' Gough raises the issue of 'human needs' as relevant in 'clarifying what is positive and what is negative' in welfare policies. He has earlier pointed to the lack of development of a Marxist theory of human needs; and indeed the work of Mary McIntosh⁷, who embarked on an approach to this question in two recent articles, would appear to be the only new work in this area.⁸ (More generally, the domination of the field of social welfare, policy and administration by Fabianism and functionalism has reflected an absence in the works of Marx himself, where references to the problems of social welfare are confined virtually to brief 'asides' or remain highly schematic, as in the section in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.⁹)

Surprisingly, perhaps, in view of his emphasis on the crucial nature of class struggle, Gough's conclusions are faint and rather pessimistic. The 'golden era' of the welfare state—the postwar boom—has gone and with it too, perhaps, must go the welfare state as we know it; either accumulation and economic growth or political and social rights may have to be sacrificed.

Welfare and Class

In many ways *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* is a curate's egg of a book, which may reflect the rather contradictory nature of the

⁷ Mary McIntosh, 'The State and the Oppression of Women' in Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe (Eds.), *Feminism and Materialism*, London 1978; and Mary McIntosh, 'The Welfare State and the Needs of the Dependent Family' in S. Burman (Ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, London 1979.

⁸ cf. also Patrice Grevet, *Devenir Populaire et Financement Public*, Paris 1976.

⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, London 1970.

whole project. On the one hand, the explanatory accounts of Marxist theory are clear; but they are pitched at an elementary level that does not lead on smoothly to the later chapters on debates within Marxist theory, nor does his decision to place the most abstract parts of these arguments in appendices resolve this problem—the problem of the heterogeneous nature of his audience, as he is himself aware. In his presentation of debates among Marxists, Gough attempts to steer a middle line and to deal with some of the criticisms made of an earlier article¹⁰ of his; this results in certain inconsistencies. One debate relevant to the economics of welfare was the debate around what constitutes productive labour, which sought to establish whether the labour of state employees came into the productive or unproductive category in the Marxist sense. Two other questions raised were; what was the role of class struggle in relation to the capitalist economy; and what was the nature of the ‘social wage’. On the last point Gough has reiterated his earlier position; but while the ‘social wage’—like the ‘welfare state’—may be a useful journalistic phrase to use as a sort of portmanteau concept in indicating a whole range of services and benefits provided by the state, I do not believe that Gough has proved its theoretical status in the way he seeks to do, even when he coins the phrase ‘collective consumption’ for services such as education, and seeks to reserve the phrase ‘social wage’ for cash benefits. For Gough these cash benefits achieve the status of a wage because they are the object of class struggle, and are, along with money wages, fought for by the unions. To argue in this way is to replace analysis with metaphor. A wage is paid to an individual in return for his potentiality to work for a stated period of time; cash benefits in most cases entail no such commitment to work. In using this analogy, Gough is in danger of reducing all struggles around ‘needs’ to the purely economic level.

This is curious since, if anything, he has a tendency to ‘over-politicize’ in the way in which he uses a very general notion of ‘class struggle’. It is true, though, that Gough has corrected much of the over-politicization for which his earlier article was criticized,¹¹ so that he gives a careful and much more balanced account of the relationship between the way in which the capitalist state formulates and implements policies to secure the long-term reproduction of capitalist social relations, and the role of class struggle, taking pains at a number of points to re-emphasize this crucial interaction.

To achieve this, Gough has to thread his way through a mass of heterogeneous welfare reform, acknowledging that the modes through which class pressure generates welfare reforms are many and various. His account of these struggles is necessarily extremely condensed; yet ultimately, the precise role played by sections of the working class (and the role of different sections of the ruling class) can only be fully appreciated in terms of detailed analyses of particular struggles (Nor-

¹⁰ Ian Gough, ‘State Expenditure in Advanced Capitalism’, *NLR* 92, July-August 1975.

¹¹ Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris, ‘The Debate on State Expenditure’ *NLR* 92, July-August 1976; Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris, ‘Controversial Issues in Marxist Economic Theory’, in Ralph Miliband and John Saville, (Eds.) *The Socialist Register* 1976, London.

man Ginsburg's *Class, Capital and Social Policy*,¹² a further volume in this same series, offers an excellent account of housing and social security in Britain in this respect) rather than by wheeling some generalized notion of class struggle onto the stage as the *deus ex machina* who is to save us from the dreaded evils of functionalism and economism. For there is a hidden political agenda here, to which I shall return in a moment.

Thirdly, Gough does not fully clarify his position on productive versus unproductive labour. As we saw, he writes in his introduction of the scale of state expenditure as a 'fetter on the process of capital accumulation and economic growth itself.' Yet he concludes eventually that 'a growing level of welfare expenditure need not interfere with the accumulation of capital, so long as the higher "social wage" could be financed out of total labour costs (the value of labour power) rather than from profits (surplus value).' (Part of his discussion of this issue is clouded by his exposition of the work of Robert Bacon and Walter Eltis,¹³ two non-Marxist economists the introduction of whose work is unhelpful.) Gough attempts to argue that the labour of those working for the state may be as 'efficient' as that of workers in the 'productive' sector of the economy and may, by reason of its efficiency become productive; but again, analogy is an insufficient argument, and the concept of 'efficiency' is neither helpful nor indeed relevant in this context; neither hard work, nor surplus labour, necessarily create surplus value.

Politics of Welfare

These are particular problems. But *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* is also part of a wider Marxist debate. This may in very general terms be seen as part of the continuing attempt by the left in Britain (and elsewhere) to escape the heritage of Stalinism. For years, there was on the left no critique of the state, any more than there was of the family. The initial revolt against the state in the sixties—the revolt of 'radicals' who were not necessarily Marxists—was essentially a moral and untheorized revolt against the Poor Law quality of social security, against the discriminatory way in which gypsies and immigrants were treated, against the plight of the homeless and the harshness of the institutions in which they were placed. The injection of a Marxist analysis into these struggles had the great advantage that it raised the criticisms above the level of moralism and explained why in the supposedly benign welfare state individuals were subjected to humiliation, penury and worse in state institutions and at the hands of state functionaries. Why, since there was social security, was it set so low? Why, since families could be made homeless through no fault of their own, were they then punished and stigmatized? Why, since deserted women were no longer supposed to be regarded as 'fallen', should they then be forced by the operations of the cohabitation ruling to behave as though they were prostitutes and (effectively) sell their sexual services in return for the economic support of a man? The

¹² Norman Ginsburg, *Class, Capital and Social Policy*, London 1979.

¹³ Robert Bacon and Walter Eltis, *Britain's Economic Problems: Too Few Producers*, London 1976.

developing Marxist and feminist analyses of the early seventies began to undertake explanations of circumstances that the radical liberals of the sixties had been able to perceive only as the malfunctioning of bureaucracy or as moral injustice.

The moralism of the radicals was insufficient because it was ultimately subjective and relied on a number of latent humanist assumptions. It was not fully political; it could never explain the situations it faced. Nonetheless I feel it is dangerous to sneer, as Jill Hodges and Athar Hussain¹⁴ do, at 'the facile moralism against "snooping" which characterizes radical literature on social welfare and assumes, paradoxically, that the family is and should remain "private" in some pre-given sense'. Not only is this a misrepresentation of that literature, which in fact problematized 'the family' at an early stage; it is also a facile dismissal of the development of struggles around welfare provision over a number of years. The initial motivation of many individuals drawn into these struggles was often moral revulsion; it is politically unwise as well as arrogant to belittle this.

All the same it was the emergent Marxist analysis of the state which acted as a corrective both to the economism of the Stalinist left and to the moralism of the radicals. The 'over-politicization' I mentioned above was one outcome of the flight from the heritage of Stalinism, and expressed the idea: 'that it is necessary to concentrate on political and distributional class struggle as the source of crises in order to avoid the dangers of economism with its emphasis on a mechanistic determination of social events by the sphere of production'.¹⁵

This has sometimes been taken to bizarre extremes. Dave Purdy¹⁶ for example has written that: 'wage militancy reinforces capitalist values and the capitalist way of life, and thus acts as a barrier to ideological and political advance. For example, it helps to entrench the consumerist ethos with its privatized, individualistic and passive visions of the good life'. The logic of this argument is that militant trades unionists really are, after all, greedy in the way the *Daily Express* portrays them—selfish materialists holding the country to ransom. Purdy goes on to argue that the wages struggle 'splits off the workers' movement from the feminist critique of the competitive/aggressive features of male domination'. Now it is true that the economic features of many wage struggles present a variety of political problems, and it is true, too, that the labour movement has not dealt very successfully with the many difficult ideological and agitational problems presented by the attacks directed at it by the mass media; but it is not true that *any* fight for higher wages is *fundamentally* wrong in the way Purdy suggests. His misappropriation of feminism seems equally unfortunate. Are we all to sink back into some pre-given 'feminine' that rejects aggression at all times?

¹⁴ Jill Hodges and Athar Hussain, 'Review Article: Jacques Donzelow, *La Politique des Familles*', *Ideology and Consciousness*, 1979 No 5, p. 98.

¹⁵ Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris, 'Controversial Issues in Marxist Economic Theory', p. 168.

¹⁶ This and the subsequent quotation come from a letter written by Dave Purdy to *Comment*, February 3, 1979.

While not going so far as this, Peter Leonard¹⁷ himself argues against the whole idea of separating: 'too rigidly "economic" from "political" factors . . . for the dynamics of the capitalist system, its need to accumulate and maintain profitability, is essentially one of the class struggle of the exploiters against the exploited. It is this struggle which fundamentally *creates* the "economic" contradictions which governments, both social democratic and right-wing, must face.' (my italics)

However, it is true that it is difficult, and perhaps not too constructive in the field of welfare policy and provision, to separate out the economic, the political and the ideological. Ian Gough himself explicitly does not deal with the ideological, while recognizing that 'the political economy approach developed here urgently needs complementing with a study of the ideology of the welfare state'; but a number of writers have attempted to address the issue of the politics and ideology of the crisis, and they have necessarily highlighted welfarist issues.

'Popular Rightism'?

In an influential article Stuart Hall¹⁸ was careful to insist on the specificity of the present crisis; and he was equally careful in distinguishing between popular responses to the crisis and ruling class responses so that he was able to draw pertinent conclusions as to the intermeshing of the two. Later responses have not been so careful. Martin Jacques¹⁹ for instance collapses together various disparate elements to form his conception of the new 'popular rightism': 'It was also an increasingly global movement. Its dominant philosophical characteristic was essentially backward-looking, the desire to assert traditional ideological themes such as the family, the nation, patriotism, free enterprise and authority. It embraced a multitude of responses including the Black Papers on education, Chicago monetarism, the Festival of Light, SPUC, the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the National Front and racism.'

This kind of rhetorical over-simplification is not helpful politically, since it leaves us uncertain what to do in the face of an apparently monolithic Thatcherist juggernaut. Nor is it particularly accurate. There is no evidence, for example, of a *popular* swing towards an anti-abortion position (the political situation as regards abortion is a very special one). In no sense are the Festival of Light or Mary Whitehouse's organization manifestations of a *popular* movement; in a recent survey of opinion poll findings David Lipsey²⁰ suggested that on issues relating to pornography, sexual behaviour generally and even homosexual behaviour public opinion appears to be broadly speaking 'liberal' while he also challenged the assumption made by many on the left that the Tory victory at the polls in May 1979 represented a vote against welfare spending and government spending in general.

¹⁷ Peter Leonard, 'Restructuring the Welfare State', *Marxism Today*, December 1979, p. 8.

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, 1979, Volume 23, No 1.

¹⁹ Martin Jacques, 'Thatcherism: The Impasse Broken?' *Marxism Today*, 1979, Volume 23, No. 10, p. 10.

²⁰ David Lipsey, 'The Reforms People Want', *New Society*, October 4, 1979.

On the other hand hostility to the trades unions and the view that they wield too much power are clearly widespread, and here the immense ideological thrust of the Right in discrediting trades unions and the labour movement has paid off. Similarly, hysterical coverage in the mass media of social security frauds has both reflected and exacerbated the widespread hostility in the population at large towards 'scroungers' and that part of the welfare system at least which hands out cash to the indigent. Peter Golding and Sue Middleton²¹ have demonstrated, however, that there is nothing particularly new about this—hostility towards the poor is profoundly a part of British culture; the backlash nonetheless mobilizes this hostility, and Stuart Hall²² showed how aptly these popular feelings fitted in with monetarism and its emphasis on thrift, and: 'the restoration of competition and personal responsibility for effort and reward, the image of the over-taxed individual, enervated by welfare coddling, his initiative sapped by handouts by the state'.

But in general the pessimism and disarray at present evident on the left comes in part out of a prior over-valuation of the political which has at times verged on voluntarism. Belatedly, the left is coming to realize that many working class individuals never experienced the welfare state as other than bureaucratic and repressive. But it would appear that this recognition is for them a recent event. If Paul Corrigan²³ is to be believed: 'The election was one more piece of evidence for a significant shift of popular consciousness away from social democracy. Apart from minor hiccups, generations of working people had been politically brought up and educated within the boundaries of social democracy. I believed and I think most of us acted on the belief that the case for massive state involvement in both welfare and in the economy had been irrevocably won against the hearts and minds of most working people. Consequently we treated this as a sound ideological base to go forward to a real socialist consciousness.'

This extraordinary statement represents, in its naivety, a blindness even to the Fabian and radical critiques of the welfare state which Marxism claims to transcend. As early as 1960 Audrey Harvey²⁴ was attacking the authoritarian way in which the welfare state operated. The 'Rediscovery of Poverty' undertaken by Peter Townsend and Brian Abel Smith²⁵ made it abundantly clear that many of the claims made for the welfare state were empty ones; and ordinary social workers are well aware of what many working people feel about 'the Welfare'. Ten years ago the Claimants Union was making points very similar to Audrey Harvey's about the nature of social security provision, albeit with more militancy. Since then, feminists struggling around welfarist issues have become increasingly aware of the many problems surround-

²¹ Peter Golding and Sue Middleton, 'Making Claims: News Media and the Welfare State', *Media, Culture and Society*, 1979 Volume 1.

²² Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', p. 14.

²³ Paul Corrigan, 'Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy', *Marxism Today*, 1979, Volume 23 No 12, p. 14.

²⁴ Audrey Harvey, *Casualties of the Welfare State*, Fabian Tract, London 1960.

²⁵ Brian Abel Smith and Peter Townsend, *The Poor and the Poorest*, London 1965.

ing the *form* in which welfare provision comes; demands for the right to childbirth at home, for refuges for battered women, for day care, and abortions, are not simply quantitative demands for more health and social service provision, but for a particular quality of provision, one that is non-authoritarian.

Yet Corrigan's over-valuation of the welfare state is the logical result of his political position, which is the emphasis on class struggle as a corrective to 'left functionalism'.²⁶ Such an approach is always in danger of denying the contradictory nature of welfare provision, of which Gough is indeed well aware (which is one of the strongest points of his book). A generalized idea of 'class struggle' remains somewhat empty. It cannot deal with the feminist critique of welfare provision, for example, which raises uncomfortable problems for those who seek to stress the role of working class demands as determinant in securing welfare reforms, and as inherently progressive, since the class struggle that obtained the Factory Acts and the Beveridge Plan could certainly not be said to have operated in the interest of women who were in both cases defined as homebound individuals dependent on a male bread-winner. (One could of course escape this particular dilemma by asserting that the subordination of women is the result of 'patriarchy' and as such is absolutely independent of capitalism; but to pose such an absolute duality is itself theoretically unsatisfactory—which does *not* imply that I believe the oppression of women to be a mere effect of capitalism.)

Corrigan, Jacques and Leonard argue for the democratization of state services as a solution to the contradictory elements in it, which they do recognize. Yet the call to 'democratize' also remains somewhat empty. The 'transformation' of the state can mean anything in the abstract. One example of a successful attempt to democratize state provision is the case of King Hill hostel in Kent²⁷ where a battle took place in the sixties to change the rules in order to allow men to remain with their families in this institution for the homeless instead of being turned out onto the street and denied proper access to wife and children. Yet one particular feminist critique²⁸ of this 'radical' action (which indeed operated on a number of unexplicated assumptions about family life and the inalienable unity of the family) has suggested that many of the women in these families were battered and were only too anxious to escape their men-folk. So for them a 'democratic' demand was not progressive.

More generally, the aims of 'democratization' must be spelt out. Democratic control implies the mass participation of individuals in running, controlling and making decisions about the state institutions that effect their lives. Many shun such participation on top of long hours of paid or domestic labour (or both) and we may wonder to what

²⁶ Paul Corrigan, 'The Welfare State as an Arena of Class Struggle', *Marxism Today*, March 1977.

²⁷ Ron Bailey, *The Squatters*, Harmondsworth 1973.

²⁸ Jalna Hanmer, 'Community Action, Women's Aid and the Women's Liberation Movement' in Marjorie Mayo, *Women in the Community*, London 1977. While I have fundamental disagreements with Jalna Hanmer's analysis of the position of women, the contradiction she perceived in the King Hill action is an important one.

extent democratic control is compatible with capitalism. The demand becomes rhetorical and utopian unless it is quite clear what is meant—and we have yet to reach the situation in which the demand for democratization enjoys democratic mass support. The first priority therefore is explanatory, agitational and persuasive.

Welfare in Crisis

The foregoing discussion, which may seem to have wandered away from *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* is actually relevant to it, since it addresses what remains ultimately an absence in Ian Gough's book. In attempting to escape 'over-politicization' Gough has denuded his work of any real and certainly of any detailed political discussion of the relationship of welfare state, cuts and crisis, and has lapsed back into economic determinism. The book may not have intended to provide a detailed political critique, so my criticism on this point may be at one level unfair; yet at another level it is justified, since the book explicitly seeks to reach workers in the social services and other areas of the welfare state, and to provide no political argument will certainly discourage such readers.

More surprisingly, perhaps, Gough does not suggest *how* the restructuring of the welfare state which he foresees, is to take place, nor does he discuss the possible *political* effects of the (*economic*) welfare cuts. For it is the case after all that these, though huge and crippling, are still a drop in the ocean of total state expenditure. Could it be therefore that as well as being an attempt to cut state spending, they are intended to have the political and ideological effects of (1) changing the nature of the welfare state and (2) attacking organized labour without a direct confrontation?²⁹ To cut back on the welfare state may be part of a softening up process as a prelude to more direct attacks on workers. The issues of whether social security is to continue to be paid to the families of strikers is a pertinent one here. Ideologically, the idea that basic needs are met by welfare provision may remain, yet these needs may be redefined. (For example, the government white paper on the cuts speaks of the 'dis-economics of small scale teaching' and the idea that small classes enhance learning has come under attack.) Again, welfare services may continue to be provided but in a more commercialized form; simultaneously and in a sense paradoxically the use of voluntary labour (that of women, of course) will be increased. And this whole process has been facilitated by the long-term failure of state services to provide what users really want and need. What back sufferer, for example, who could afford to do so, has not sought help from the private sector and 'fringe medicine' because (1) the NHS cannot cope with chronic non-fatal illness and does not prioritize it and (2) its over-reliance on chemotherapy and technology results in a neglect of those diseases that do not respond to such forms of treatment. Would not most individuals, *as things stand*, honestly prefer to live in a house they own?³⁰ How many parents have no worries about comprehensive schooling?

²⁹ I am indebted to Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris in this section.

³⁰ After the General Election in May 1979 the *Islington Gazette* interviewed a handful

Finally, will *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* reach those for whom it is intended? Many students and practitioners within the welfare services³¹ see themselves as fighting the injustices of society, and often as rejecting its dominant values of greed, materialism and violence. Yet their response to Marxism is often hostile since they think it 'snobbish' to talk about class and find any emphasis on fighting for more of the cake ('class struggle') 'greedy' and alienating. They believe in the importance of attention to the individual and this often seems to involve (which it need not logically do) a rejection of any form of collective action; attuned to the nuances of individual feeling and difference, they find an emphasis on collectivity again alienating.³² Their commitment is ultimately often to a notion of the reconciliation of classes, or of the individual to society, rather akin to the beliefs of the Christian Socialists, although usually not formally religious; often they find Marxism unattractive because of its apparent neglect of feeling and its obsession with the material.

An earlier book in the same series, by Paul Corrigan and Peter Leonard,³³ did begin to address these problems. I presume that *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* is intended as theoretical underpinning. But ultimately I am left questioning the degree to which it is or can be successful, given that it is also trying to address a highly sophisticated level of debate. We are left with a frustrating book, since Ian Gough shows himself capable of considerable clarity of explanation yet leaves so much unexplained. Rather than achieving a synthesizing breakthrough, he has fallen into a certain eclecticism and has failed to resolve many of the problems he himself has raised. Nonetheless, it will be useful to the already sympathetic reader, even if it does not make many converts. The project is interesting and to be applauded, and even if we are still left in the end with many questions, we are perhaps at least clearer as to the questions we ought to ask.

of local council tenants to measure their reaction to the Tory proposal to sell off council homes. It is of interest that the tenants were not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Most of them would have liked to own their own home, but most of them also did not want to own a house on a council estate—such presumably is the stigma associated with council housing.

³¹ cf. Geoffrey Pearson, 'Social Work as the Privatized Solution to Public Ills', *British Journal of Social Work*, 1973, Volume 3 No 2.

³² Elizabeth Wilson, 'Feminism and Social Work' in Roy Bailey and Mike Brake (eds.), *Radical Social Work and Practice*, London 1980.

³³ Paul Corrigan and Peter Leonard, *Social Work Practice under Capitalism*, 1978.

John Goode

The Moment of 'Scrutiny'

In 1968, Perry Anderson drew attention to the bizarre role and status of literary criticism in the 'national culture'; in a context in which the social sciences and historical disciplines were inhibited by a largely imported positivism, it seemed to offer itself as the only field in which a radical and synoptic cultural inquiry could take place. He rightly attributed this potential to the influence of Leavis and the way in which his work had been extended and transformed by Raymond Williams. In the last twelve years much has clearly changed. Not only has the overall picture altered, but especially the specific mode of literary analysis which Leavis made available as the basis of this cultural practice, the combination of the close reading of a defined canon with a global social and ethical awareness, has been questioned from within the field itself. Williams, for example, has more and more called attention to the limitations of literary criticism, and those who have opposed Williams have done so by trying to expose the culturalist ideology of the methodology he evolved from literary criticism. But the domination of a discourse which has its origins in Leavis and the impact of the journal with which his work is most closely associated, if it has been observed, resisted and even consigned to an alien past, has never been fully explained. *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'** does just that, and in doing so, not only does it bring the bizarre within the realm of rational historical explanation, but it also shows how the conditions of its existence have not been met and altered. In other words, Mulhern, by raising the question of the historic significance of literary criticism, raises also the question of its continuing role in the national culture at a radical level. I shall argue that he has made, by doing this, the most important intervention in this domain of socialist cultural theory since *Culture and Society* appeared in 1958.

In Mulhern's analysis, the concept of the 'moment' carries two implications. On the one hand, it indicates a completed history, places *Scrutiny* in a conjuncture of many levels—personal, institutional, ideological—which determines its formation, development and decline, and explains the link between its dominant ideological discourse and the parameters of its various concerns and points of view. On the other hand, precisely by exposing the specific conditions of its existence, he is able to show that the moment in time is not, at another level, ended simply by revisionist assimilation or by ideological distantiation, because such postures fail to confront *Scrutiny* as a form of cultural practice whose commitment to a 'discourse on community', chosen intellectual field (literary criticism) and particular combative style are mutually interdependent. To be specific at the cost of vulgarizing a

* Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, NLB, London 1979.

complex account, Mulhern shows how, at a given point in its development, *Scrutiny* was displaced as the leading journal of literary criticism by its post-war Oxford rival, *Essays in Criticism*, which institutionalized and professionalized its methodology and levelled down its polemical urgency into 'controversy'. Partly, this was made possible by the emergence of institutionalizing and conservative tendencies within *Scrutiny* itself. But it also leaves a space, the space made by its extra-mural, socially aware energies, which comes to be occupied by socialist cultural analysis. Such a development means that, in historical terms, the 'moment' as conjuncture is at an end. The new scenario is one in which 'literary criticism' is able to continue as an academic discipline unhampered by the pursuit of an expressive totality, while 'socialist' analysis educated within literary criticism pursues an effectively autonomous career in an unwanted penumbra. But this bifurcation of 'the moment' means only that its substance persists in a more resilient form. The moment will not be ended, Mulhern contends, without a more militant break, one which combats not only an ideology but also an ideological practice. The first step towards such a break is surely a firm historical understanding of the moment itself. There have, of course, been earlier analyses by socialist writers, but the present text differs from them in three ways which together make it a decisively new attack.

The first major difference is in the project itself. Earlier accounts (I think of Williams, Anderson and Eagleton in particular) focus primarily on Leavis. Despite the shrewdness of these analyses, two related limitations arise from this. In the first place, Leavis appears with an enigmatic aura, given an attention, even a respect, his work fails to justify either in itself or, more importantly, in terms of its impact in the context in which it is discussed. He is dwarfed, for example, in the ideological traditions in which Williams and Eagleton place him. What did Leavis contribute to the debate about culture and society whose terms were worked out by Carlyle and Ruskin, transformed into terms directly relevant to education and the study of literature by Arnold, and given new urgency by Eliot and Lawrence? The answer, crudely, is that he injected the Arnoldian variant of the tradition with some of the greater critical rigour worked out by I. A. Richards, and he managed a precarious mediation between Eliot and Lawrence. If this can be more positively stated, Leavis can be said to have made literary criticism the dominant field in which this tradition could survive without congealing itself as an identifiable ideology, but this is not because of the effectivity of his critical practice. He offered no ways of accounting for the complex effects of literary language: in this respect it was Richards who made the major tactical advance by making 'practical criticism' (the empiricist/idealist sanctification of literature as commodity) the determinant basis of literary analysis, and it was Empson and his American followers who facilitated the repression of the ideological formation of the literary text by an exclusive attention to the connotative features of language (I should say that Empson's later work shows this influence to have been a *misappropriation*). Neither the history of an ideological tradition nor an analysis of the presumptions of literary criticism will explain Leavis's importance. This is not to imply that his importance has been exaggerated, but

that it has not been identified. And this is bound up with the second consequence of the focus on Leavis. His presence is enigmatic; but his nature, is too easily explained away, by this concentration because his work can be analysed merely as text, and as text, it can be identified as refutable 'ideology' whether, like Williams, we are considering a cultural tradition or, like Eagleton, the ideology of literary form. Both analyses move on a level of abstraction which, leaving intact the mystery of his presence, marginalizes the specific effectivity of what he represents.

It is not Leavis who is important, but *Scrutiny*, and *Scrutiny* as Mulhern shows is both *text and event*. This means many things. In the first place, although Leavis's *influence* is at the centre of the text, the text cannot be reductively identified with his *ideas*. On the contrary, Mulhern shows again and again, how great was the variation of attitude and tendency among its contributors, between Knights and Traversi, Bantock and Ford, for example, on all the major issues discussed; literature, politics, education and so on. Leavis thought of *Scrutiny* as the embodiment of a consensus, but this is by no means the same as a doctrinal unity. The attention to the group, rather than to its central figure is not just a gain in empirical accuracy (though that in itself helps to explain why the influence of *Scrutiny* is much greater than any identifiable body of ideas); it also makes it possible to identify the real parameters of its ideology—that is, not a derivable system, but rather a set of boundaries within which thought is contained and activated, a kind of transformational grammar. Furthermore, since it is not merely a reprinted text, but an event, with determinate conditions of existence, Mulhern is able to give a material analysis of *Scrutiny*, to show in terms of its actual existence as a journal, why it was formed when it was, why it confronted Marxism as a political force, made gestures of accommodation and then retreated increasingly into literature as a self-contained discourse, and education as a primary domain of social action. In other words, the project itself makes it possible as well to see that ideology as a cultural practice functioning in relation to a given history. To put it in terms borrowed from Benjamin, this book is the first analysis of the meaning of literary criticism in the national culture which aims at sundering truth from falsehood by starting with 'the object riddled with error'.

This leads to the second gain, and that is the strict historical method of the analysis. The detailed coverage of the journal's contents, day-to-day problems of policy and management, its reception, its relationship to the changing intellectual climate of the thirties and forties—these form the substance of the book. But it would be wrong to see this simply as solidity of specification. Mulhern keeps as much as possible to a chronological narrative which constantly exposes four inescapable motifs that constitute its ideology in action, the contours of a cultural practice. First, there is a contradictory historiography committed on the one hand to a mechanical determinism and on the other to an idealist concept of tradition. Secondly, there is an epistemological commitment to varieties of irrationalism—intuition, experience, civilized sensibility and so on. These two at once identify the journal's radicalism, and limit its engagement with any theoretical

position. They also entail and inform the two fields which despite many excursions constitute *Scrutiny's* home territory: literary criticism and education. All four are bound up with an essential function—the subordination and ultimate repression of politics. The narrative brings this out clearly. The themes are announced early on, but as they sharpen themselves in polemical encounters they close more and more around the journal. It becomes clear eventually that the primary condition of its success in educational circles was its failure as a social intervention. Mulhern shows how from the mid-thirties to the war period, there is a change in the general direction of *Scrutiny's* strategy. In its early years, it is concerned above all to combat rival tendencies in contemporary culture. Marxism provides the major boundary of its self-definition—both as rival and as possible ally. During the war, in the context of the larger debates about the future structure of society, the strategy becomes one of seeking to define itself as a critical check on the state; in other words it becomes more and more concerned with institutions and the possibility of a role within them. When this fails to make any material impact, *Scrutiny* becomes embalmed. Thus though the central project, giving literary criticism the task of bringing 'culture's gift of wisdom to a blinded civilization', was perfected by the increasing attention to the novel as a self-sufficient mode of 'sociological' knowledge, it was also, by the same process, involuted. Literary criticism evolves from a radical discipline to a discipline demanding incorporation, and from that to an entrenched, independent discipline. It is at this point that the myths of the organic past become more and more dominant and despairing: 'lost hierarchies, lost wholes' is the keynote of the cultural analysis at this point, accompanying the liberal and modern 'responsible critic' as reminder that the recognitions available to the educated reader of the great tradition could not easily be transposed to the actual world. I immunize the argument by summary. The point is that the detail and the chronicity of the account emphasize the inevitability of this involution. It is not a question of a set of commitments going wrong: it is the specific history of a given project's development.

Criticism and Education

The third gain derives from the precise historical materialism of the analysis; Mulhern escapes the need to explain the whole ratification of literary criticism deriving from *Scrutiny's* project as a national eccentricity. On the contrary, by revealing the related commitments of the whole project to the irrational and the idea of tradition, he inserts it into a 'discourse on community' which is part of the so-called 'revolt against positivism' in early twentieth-century Europe. It implies an elitism also evident in Benda and Pareto, an epistemological aspiration to the identity of knower and known also evident in Dilthey and Croce, and an insistence on community evident in the cult of the *Volksgeist* and in classical sociology. This perspective radically alters the way in which literary criticism as a whole must be seen. The tendency to explain Leavis in terms of an English 'culture and society' tradition, as I have said, disguises the real nature of his importance. It also clearly fails to challenge the central claim of the practice of literary criticism that there is such a thing as 'tradition', and hence such a thing as

'literature', an ahistorical object whose ultimate identity is differentiated from its immediate existence in terms of text and context. The disguise and the concession are the terms on which Leavis can be negotiated, especially from the left. Seen as a fraction of a phase in European culture, not only is negotiation impossible, but also the substitution of different concepts in the same frame is impossible too. For it is not the kind of literary/cultural criticism and its specific valuations that have to be questioned—it is the practice of literary criticism itself as a social action, in its active elitism, its active competition with political awareness, *fought for* by *Scrutiny* that must be exposed and combated.

This argument has many implications and they clearly need to be worked out in many different ways. For example, Mulhern deals only very briefly with the socialist cultural theory which has grown up in the space left by the demise of *Scrutiny* in the last twenty years. He certainly indicates the degree to which it deceived itself about Leavis, but he also acknowledges that part of what it admired, his combative style of literary practice, is precisely what is necessary to challenge its effect. And certainly, the recent work of Williams himself offers its own verdict on the repressive tendencies of the discipline he met at Cambridge. *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* needs to be discussed with *Politics and Letters*. It would be wrong, I think, to use Mulhern in the too easy dismissal of Williams which we have been seeing recently. The more because much of the alternative work on literature claiming to be Marxist has tended to confirm the entrenched specialization of the later years of *Scrutiny*, and certainly it is more likely to be able to co-exist in peaceful competition with what Mulhern sees rightly as the general, central activity of literary criticism in the academic structure, that of a discourse 'whose foremost general cultural function is the repression of politics'. As long as we are all committed to 'Literature', we can have our own conferences, our own postgraduate programmes. We can even assist that repression precisely by becoming a permitted political percentage in the whole ecology of English studies.

The second area which needs to be more fully explored is the actual impact of *Scrutiny* on education. Mulhern, of course, pays close attention to the debates about education in *Scrutiny* and recognizes that outside the confines of the book there are debates and struggles which may be bringing the moment to an end in other ways. But the role of literary criticism in 'English' as a subject, and the place of that subject in the curriculum as a whole, is of crucial relevance to the kind of inquiry Mulhern's study initiates. Education is the site of a tense debate in *Scrutiny*, but is a debate permitted by the evolution of literary criticism as a total cultural practice. On the one hand, this practice proposes the identity of the knower and the known, the primacy of recognition and inwardness. In terms of educational theory, this allies itself with romantic concerns with self-development, and in the context of a sociological vision of an alienating industrialism, leads to a specific variant of that romanticism—Denys Thompson's argument that the aims of a genuine education should be to produce 'misfits' rather than 'spare parts' for the industrial machine. On the other hand,

the very commitment to a special realm apart from history but serving as a basis for a critical attitude towards it, literature itself, requires a special community to ensure access to it—'tradition', the central historiographical category, demands an elite, and therefore means for discovering and accommodating that elite. Thus on the one hand, creativity and experiment, and on the other, standards and selective institutions such as the university—these apparently opposed emphases both follow logically from the central position. There is a very clear summary of the issues in Mulhern's analysis of the controversy between Bantock and Ford in 1948. He rightly judges that Bantock's authoritarian defence of standards is more authentically responsive to the direction of *Scrutiny's* discourse on community than Ford's allegiance to educational modernism. But we need also to know how those tendencies fared in the history of post-war education.

This is a whole area of research, but it is urgent and important because the role of literary criticism in higher education is clearly only the product of the whole organization of 'English' in the schools. And I would be very hard pressed to decide in terms of practice the relative importance of Bantock and Ford. From the romantic variant a very large body of educational theory and material has flowed. It produced Holbrook's *English for the Rejected* and a whole movement away from a concern with language as etiquette to language as 'response'. Arguably, it produced the early poetry of Gunn and Hughes and certainly helped the very rapid assimilation of Heaney—the anti-urban misfit is the primary image of what is offered as the staple diet of non-examinable literature. At the same time, of course, the actual structure of the system solidly supports the formation of the elite in a very precise way. As soon as there is an effective separation of levels, the division of children into o-level and cse, 'literature' appears as a separate identifiable category for the privileged group, distinct from 'language', nominating texts as classics. At the next more selective level, literature becomes the only form in which 'English' is represented. A minority is chosen and shaped which in turn will provide the basis of the group of intellectuals whose role it will be to provide literacy at all levels. This is a very superficial account, but it may be sufficient to indicate that the kind of analysis given the teaching of French language and literature by Renée Balibar is called for in this country.

This links with the point I have made about socialist cultural theory, for one way in which Mulhern's analysis of *Scrutiny* interrogates that programme is that it draws attention to the specific function of literary criticism as a means of social control. Cultural studies, like Marxist theories of literature, tends to analyse other instances of social control, the media, literary production, without understanding that the very terms of its analysis, the very conditions of its existence, materially and ideologically, its own educational insertion, need to be investigated first. Without it, both must remain politically safe. Mulhern is convincing about the need for precisely *Scrutiny's* combative style of cultural practice in ending 'the moment of *Scrutiny*'. The first stage of such a combat has to be the fullest self-consciousness. The early editors of *Scrutiny* had this self-consciousness—they had not only an ideology

but also a practical terrain for its operation, a terrain in which enemies could be named, rivals encountered, institutional arrangements negotiated. They operated in this way as a *party*. Those of us who have tried to oppose or replace its dominance have nothing equivalent to offer. Increasingly we talk to each other, and at best recruit some of the disaffected. An account such as this of the practice of literary criticism must force us onto a new level of self-questioning. At the same time, because it is the history of a practice, it must create the possibility of a new initiative. There will be many, even on the left, who will argue that *Scrutiny* only represents a specific movement within literary criticism. On one level this is true—the ‘Leavisite’ presence is contested often and ably within the discipline, and is in some places very marginal: it is not the dominant mode at Oxford, for example, where a critic such as John Bayley has spent a lifetime implicitly challenging all the assumptions of *Scrutiny*. But the analysis makes it clear that what has to be contested are the *parameters* of the discourse, which are also those of the opposition to *Scrutiny*. Because of the new demand it makes and the new possibility of struggle it exposes, I think *The Moment of ‘Scrutiny’* announces a new period.

That is why I compared it to *Culture and Society*, but I was not merely thinking of a journalistic evaluation, but of a more specific basis of comparison. To say that a book announces a new period is not the same as saying that it initiates it—that would be a regression to precisely the idealism Mulhern contests. The importance of *Culture and Society* was not merely a question of its merit, but also a question of its appropriateness at a given historical juncture, and that moment was defined by a given intellectual climate in which the Communist Party was breaking apart under the pressure of its own contradictions, and an economic and social situation in which the levels of exploitation were heavily disguised by a conjuncture of an apparently prosperous capitalism and the retention of the minimal welfare structure set up in the forties. Williams’ intervention seems to me to have been highly political because it drew attention to areas in which class conflict was persistently visible. No doubt this is to simplify, but it is to contrast it with the situation in which Mulhern’s book appears. That disguise no longer exists, and with its disappearance, the marginality of a politically active cultural theory can no longer be tolerated. The moment of *Scrutiny* was a moment of recession, and we are in another, different recession when that kind of deflection is intolerable. Of course, everything depends on how the work done by Mulhern is built on, but I think that it is at least clear that the call to a very different practice among intellectuals has been made.

new left review

ENIGMA OF THE U.S. PROLETARIAT

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Labour In American Politics

Levine
Wright

History and Forces of Production

Loew

The Austrian 'Miracle'

Williams

Sneevliet – A Comintern Odyssey

Benjamin

Brecht's Characters

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>Mike Davis</i> | Why the U.S. Working Class is Different |
| 47 | <i>Andrew Levine</i> <i>Erik Olin Wright</i> | Rationality and Class Struggle |
| 69 | <i>Raimund Loew</i> | The Politics of the Austrian 'Miracle' |
| | | <i>Reviews</i> |
| 81 | <i>Michael Williams</i> | Sneevliet and the Birth of Asian Communism |
| 92 | <i>Walter Benjamin</i> | A Radio Talk on Brecht |

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The largest working class in the world is the US proletariat, the 'collective labourer' of the premier capitalist economy of the globe. Yet this working class stands apart from any other in the West in its social and political evolution. Why this should be so is a question that historical materialism has failed to explore systematically, despite its manifest centrality to the international struggle for socialism. In this issue of review, Mike Davis proposes some elements of a historical explanation of the unique character of the American working class. From the era of the Molly Maguires in the 1870s to the sitdown strikes of the 1930s the economic class struggle in the United States took on an unsurpassed breadth and volcanic militancy. Yet the American proletariat, alone amongst Western working classes, failed to constitute itself as an independent political force. The crux of the problem, Davis argues, is not simply the failure of social democracy to implant itself in American political life; but more fundamentally, the existence of centrifugal forces which have kept the American working class permanently 'unmade' and divided for the last 150 years. Questioning the faith of classical Marxism in the inevitable equalization of levels of class consciousness between Europe and America, Davis focuses precisely on those historical and structural determinants which have produced a different working class in America: the specificity of its bourgeois-democratic revolution, the immense socio-political hegemony of the bourgeoisie, the ethno-religious polarization of the working class, racism and the impact of continuous immigration. He charts the trajectory of American labour's successive historical defeats from the Jacksonian period to the First World War, and explores the reasons for the radical disjuncture between the elemental trade union militancy of American workers and their apparent political quiescence. In a subsequent NLR article Davis will carry this analysis forward to the watershed of the Roosevelt-Truman era.

G. A. Cohen's 'Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence' is arguably the most important work of Marxist philosophy to appear in the last decade. Cohen has challenged the mainstream of Western Marxism from Gramsci to Althusser, reasserting with force and lucidity a more traditional view of Marx's theory in which it is the development of the productive forces that enjoy explanatory primacy. Erik Olin Wright and Andrew Levine rejoin with a systematic critique of this interpretation of historical materialism. In their view both Cohen and the Marx of the 1859 'Preface' are forced to ground the primacy of the productive forces in a contractarian

model of class consciousness, to the fatal detriment of any theory of how abstract class interests are actually translated into effective class capacities for defending or transforming the relations of production. Thus, they conclude that the 'orthodox' Marxism so cogently defined by Cohen cannot provide the analysis of structural obstacles to proletarian class capacity which is essential to the elaboration of socialist strategy under late capitalism.

In NLR 118 Raimund Loew examined the internal tensions between reformism and revolution which brought Austro-Marxism to destruction in the Civil War of 1934. Now he focuses on the 'economic miracle' wrought by the reborn Austrian Social Democracy of Bruno Kreisky. As Loew makes clear, the successors of Adler and Bauer have deepened and expanded their traditional hegemony over the Austrian working class, while at the same time definitively suppressing any echo of Austro-Marxism's old left wing. The result is a showpiece of social-democratic integration and state sponsored capitalist expansion. Yet at the same time Loew points to the increasing erosion of the structural supports of the Kreisky consensus, and to the emergence of a militant anti-nuclear movement and a restive trade union rank and file.

A founder of Indonesian socialism, and later Comintern representative in China, Henk Sneevliet was also the principal architect of the 'bloc within' strategy which attempted to mobilize the revolutionary potential of the anti-colonial movements in Asia. The extraordinary career of this Dutch revolutionary and missionary of Communism to the working classes of Asia is assessed here by Michael Williams.

Why the US Working Class is Different

In 1828—as Karl Marx once reminded his readers—a group of Philadelphia artisans organized the first ‘Labour Party’ in world history. Now, one hundred and fifty years later, a television news camera depicts a group of modern Philadelphia workers arguing in their local tavern over the candidates in the 1980 presidential election. Against a background of irreverent catcalls and hisses one worker tepidly defends Carter as the ‘lesser evil’, while another, with even less ardour, tries to float the idea of a ‘protest’ vote for Reagan. Finally, with the nodding assent of most of the crowd, a rather definitive voice spells out the name of the popular choice in the campaign: N-O-T-A, (‘none of the above’). He underlines his point with the declaration that he intends to occupy a barstool rather than a polling booth on election day. In no other capitalist country is mass political abstentionism as fully developed as in the United States, where ‘silent majority’ of the working class has sat out more than half the elections of the last century.¹ Arguably, this mute, atomized protest is the historical correlative of the striking absence of an independent political party of the proletariat.

in the country that once invented both the labour party and May Day.

Perhaps no other dimension of American history is simultaneously as salient and as difficult for Marxist theory as the complex evolution of the economic class struggle in relation to a political system that has managed to repulse every attempt to create an alternative class politics. The absence of the level of working-class self-organization and consciousness represented in every other capitalist country by the prevalence of labourist, social-democratic, or Communist parties is the spectre that has long haunted American Marxism. As a first approach to the problem it may be useful briefly to review the perspective that 'classical' revolutionary theory has offered on 'American exceptionalism'.

Classical Perspectives

At one time or another, Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Lenin, and Trotsky all became fascinated with the prospects for the development of a revolutionary movement in the United States. Although each emphasized different aspects of contemporary social dynamics, they shared the optimistic belief that 'in the long run' the differences between European and American levels of class consciousness and political organization would be evened out by objective laws of historical development. In their view the American working class was a more or less 'immature' version of a European proletariat. Its development had been retarded or deflected by various conjunctural and, therefore, *transient* conditions: the 'frontier', continuous immigration, the attraction of agrarian-democratic ideologies bound up with petty-bourgeois property, the international hegemony of American capital, and so on. Once these temporary conditions began to be eroded—through the closing of the frontier, the restriction of European immigration, the triumph of monopoly over small capital, the decline of us capital's lead in world industrial productivity—then more profound and permanent historical determinants arising out of the very structure of the capitalist mode of production would come into play. In this shared scenario, a systematic economic crisis of American society would unleash class struggles on a titanic scale. Furthermore the very breadth and violence of this economic class struggle would provoke escalating conflicts with state power. In such a crisis the bourgeois-democratic institutions of American society—previously an obstacle to class coalescence—would provide a springboard for independent political action and the formation of a mass labour or socialist party. Stages of development that had taken the European proletariat generations to traverse would be 'compressed' in America by an accelerated process of 'combined and uneven development'.

Thus Engels, writing in 1886, had little doubt that the dramatic growth of the Knights of Labor together with the massive vote for Henry George in New York City's mayoralty election signalled the birth of

¹ 'The United States has consistently had the highest absentee rate to be found in any Western political system during the past fifty years'. Walter Dean Burnham, 'The United States: The Politics of Heterogeneity', in Richard Rose, (ed.), *Electoral Behaviour: a Comparative Handbook*, New York and London 1974, p. 697.

mass labour politics in America. (Engels, in fact, exhorted the 'backward' English labour movement to take these more 'advanced' American events as their model.) A similar conclusion was drawn by Lenin with regard to the apparent giant strides of the Socialist Party in the elections of 1912, and by Trotsky when, in the aftermath of the great sit-down strikes of 1936-37, a labour party again seemed likely to emerge.²

False Promises

Unfortunately, all these hopes for a qualitative political transformation of the class struggle in the United States have remained stillborn. The premonitory signs of a political break in the middle eighties turned out to be spurious, as renewed ethnic and racial divisions undermined the embryonic unification of Eastern industrial workers. Fledgling 'labour parties' collapsed as workers were successfully reabsorbed into a capitalist two-party system that brilliantly manipulated and accentuated cultural schisms in the working class. Likewise the 6% of the presidential vote that Gene Debs won in 1912—internationally acclaimed as the beginning of the Socialist Party's ascent to majority representation of the American proletariat—turned out to be its high-water mark, followed by bitter conflict and fragmentation. This socialist fratricide was, in turn, a manifestation and symptom of the profound antagonisms within the early-twentieth-century labour movement between organized 'native' craftsmen and the unorganized masses of immigrant labourers.

The Great Depression furnished the most ironic experience of all. Despite a cataclysmic collapse of the productive system and the economic class war that the crisis unleashed, the political battlements of American capitalism held firm. Indeed it can be argued that the hegemony of the political system was reinforced and extended. The same workers who defied the machine guns of the National Guard at Flint or chased the deputies off the streets during the semi-insurrectionary Minneapolis General Strike were also the cornerstone of electoral support for Roosevelt. The millions of young workers aroused by the struggle for industrial unionism were simultaneously mobilized as the shock troops of a pseudo-aristocratic politician whose avowed ambition was 'the salvation of American capitalism'. To the extent that so-called 'labour' or 'farmer-labour' parties emerged in industrial areas of the midwest or north-east they remained scarcely more than advance detachments and satellites of the New Deal.

² Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Letters to Americans, 1848-1895*, New York 1953, pp. 149-150, 239, 243-244, and 258; V.I. Lenin, 'In America', *Collected Works*, vol. 36, p. 215; Leon Trotsky 'Introduction', *Living Thoughts of Karl Marx*, New York, 1939; Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution 1880-1938*, NLB/London 1979, pp. 58, 102. Also R. Laurence Moore, *European Socialists and the American Promised Land*, New York 1970; Cristiano Camporeale, *Il marxismo teorico negli USA*, Milan 1973; Harvey Klehr, 'Marxist Theory in Search of America', *Journal of Politics*, 35, 1973, and 'Leninist Theory in Search of America', *Polity*, 9, 1976; Lewis Feuer, *Marx and the Intellectuals*, New York 1969.

Analysing the US Working Class

Thus, in spite of the periodic intensity of the economic class struggle and the episodic appearance of 'new lefts' in every generation since the Civil War, the rule of capital has remained more powerfully installed and less politically contested than in any other advanced capitalist social formation. In the face of this dilemma, and given the apparent inadequacy of the theory of the American working class as an 'immature proletariat', what other perspectives are available for conceptualizing the problem of an absent political class consciousness in the United States?

One strategy might be to shift theoretical focus from the dialectic of conjunctural constraints acting upon universal processes (the global logic of class struggle and class consciousness), and to emphasize, instead, the relative permanence of the decisive sociological or cultural features that have historically differentiated the United States. This is the approach of the current of idealist interpretations of American 'civilization' from Tocqueville to Hartz, including the Commons-Perlman school of labour historiography, which has tried to locate the originality of American history in constitutive essences like the 'absence of feudalism' or the 'ubiquity of job consciousness'. From the standpoint of this liberal metaphysics the problem of working-class consciousness is no problem at all: the political incorporation of the industrial proletariat was predestined even before its birth by the very structure of American culture—the lack of feudal class struggles, the hegemony of a Lockean world-view, the safety-valve of the frontier, and so on. Conversely, socialist consciousness is seen as the result of industrialization in a specifically European socio-historical setting littered with relics of feudalism. Unfortunately, traces of this grandiose but vulnerable ahistoricism have tinged the writings of some Marxist writers who have also tried to explain the specificity of the American working class in terms of some grand peculiarity of us history, such as the impact of immigration or the role of early mass suffrage.³

There is, however, an alternative methodology both to the old Marxist 'orthodoxy' with its faith in the eventual 'normalization' of the class struggle in the us, and the various theories of American exceptionalism with their emphasis on the passive submission of the working class to omnipotent socio-historical determinants. The point of departure is to reconstruct the basic frames of reference.

On the one hand we must discard the idea that the fate of the American working class has been shaped by any overarching *is/los* (liberal democracy, cultural individualism, or whatever) or clockwork of simple, interacting causes (upward mobility plus ethnicity plus ...). All plausible explanatory variables must be concretized within the

³ Cf. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, New York 1955, and *The Founding of New Societies*, New York 1964; and Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement*, New York 1928. An exhaustive inventory of 'single factor' theories of the exceptionalism of the American labour movement is undertaken by John Lealett and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism*, New York 1974.

historically specific contexts of class struggle and collective practice which, after all, are their only real mode of existence. Against such positivist conceptions of a working class permanently shipwrecked on 'reefs of roast beef' (Sombart)⁴ or shoals of universal suffrage (Hartz *et al.*), Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky were absolutely correct to affirm the central role of class struggle in the making of American history and in the periodic renewal of opportunities for the transformation of class consciousness.

On the other hand, the Marxist classics tended to underestimate the role of the sedimented historical experiences of the working class as they influenced and circumscribed its capacities for development in succeeding periods. Each major cycle of class struggle, economic crisis, and social restructuring in American history has finally been resolved through epochal tests of strength between capital and labour. The results of these historical collisions have been new structural forms that regulated the objective conditions for accumulation in the next period as well as the subjective capacities for class organization and consciousness. *What the emphasis on the 'temporary' character of obstacles to political class consciousness tended to obscure was precisely the cumulative impact of the series of historic defeats suffered by the American working class.* As I will attempt to show in this essay, each generational defeat of the American labour movement disarmed it in some vital respect before the challenges and battles of the following period.

The ultimate, though by no means preordained, trajectory of this disrupted history has been the consolidation of a kind of relationship between the American working class and American capitalism that stands in striking contrast to the balance of class forces in other capitalist states. It is a question not merely of the 'absence of social democracy'—although this is the most dramatic symptom—but of a qualitatively different level of class consciousness and intra-class cohesion.

Despite profound differences in national tradition as well as evident divergences in the levels of class conflict, all the proletariats of Western Europe are politically 'incorporated'—I use this term only in a highly qualified and contingent sense—through the agency of labour reformism. That is, their relationship to capitalism is mediated and regulated at a multiplicity of levels (political, economic and cultural) by *collective, self-formed institutions* that tend to create and maintain a corporate class consciousness. Certainly, in the post-war period European workers have increasingly become subject to the 'Americanizing' influence of a socially disintegrative model of mass culture and consumption, yet the solidity of working-class culture is remarkable and remains the infrastructure for socialist and communist politics throughout Western Europe.

The American working class, on the other hand, lacking a rich panoply of collective institutions or any totalizing agent of class consciousness (that is, a class party), has been increasingly integrated into American

⁴ For Sombart, see Jerome Karamel, 'The Failure of American Socialism Reconsidered', *Socialist Register*—1979, London.

capitalism through the *negativities* of its internal stratification, its privatization in consumption, and its disorganization *vis-à-vis* political and trade union bureaucracies. As Ira Katznelson has emphasized, the absence of “‘global” institutions and meaning systems of class’ in America has led to an extreme fragmentation and serialization of the work, community and political universes of the American proletariat.⁵ The proposed distinction, therefore, is between a *reformist* working class in Western Europe—historically janus-faced in the irreducible tensions of its integrated and potentially revolutionary aspects—and a ‘disorganized’ and increasingly ‘depoliticized’ working class in the United States.

I must stress, however, that this differentiation was not inscribed, once and for all, in some primordial matrix of historical or structural conditions. If anything, this contrast has only acquired its sharpest visibility and salience during the post-war wave of economic expansion when there has been, for the first time in history, a general tendency in Western Europe—or at least the EEC countries—toward a stabilization of parliamentary democracy and the growth of mass consumption. In other words, it is precisely in the period of the most well-defined structural convergence and homogenization of political terrains that the profound differences in the historical formation of the American and European proletariats have become most striking and politically consequential. What this suggests is that the watershed of ultimate significance in creating the divergence between European and American levels of proletarian class consciousness was the failure of the labour movements of the 1930’s and 1940’s to unify the American working class on either the economic or the political planes.

An analysis of this pivotal conjuncture of course requires some treatment of the accumulation of previous defeats which conditioned its outcome. The present article aims to be a kind of historical preface to an analysis of the contemporary crisis of class consciousness in the United States. Focusing on the changing interfaces between the economic class struggles, class composition, and the political system, I have attempted to trace the chain of historic ‘defeats’ and blocked possibilities that have negatively determined the position of the working class in post-war society. This problematic of the ‘unmaking’ of the American working class is argued in three steps:

First, by examining the unique course of bourgeois democratic revolution in the United States in relation to the emergence of a factory working class and its failure to achieve any initial political autonomy.

Second, by surveying the contradictory relationship between unifying waves of labour militancy and the turbulent recomposition of the proletariat by European immigration and internal migration. In particular I will focus on the successive failures of ‘labour abolitionism,’ ‘labour populism,’ and Debsian socialism to provide durable founda-

⁵ Ira Katznelson, ‘Considerations on Social Democracy in the United States’, *Comparative Politics*, October 1978, pp. 95–96.

tions for the growth of independent class politics or to generate the sociological supports for a unitary proletarian sub-culture.

Third (in a second instalment—NLR 124), by considering, in magnified detail, the legacy of the class struggles of the Roosevelt-Truman era in contributing to the current disorganization and weakness of working-class consciousness and militancy in the United States.

I must also offer the reader this *caveat* at the beginning: The set of historical determinants deployed in this analysis—the role of early mass suffrage, class composition, and so on—is purposely selective and seeks only to explicate certain relationships that I believe are both crucial and frequently misconstrued. A truly rigorous theoretical analysis would obviously have to consider other factors as well. In particular I provide only cursory accounts of three variables that would need to be much more centrally assimilated in a fuller analysis: the specificity of the political structure and the party system; the role of *pre-emptive* political repression in blocking the emergence of working-class radicalism; and the significance of the unique productivity differential enjoyed by American capital for most of its history.⁶

I. The Paradox of American 'Democracy'

There have been two, 'ideal-typical' historical paths by which independent labour politics have emerged in industrializing societies. The first embracing continental Europe—has involved the precipitation of a proletarian current in the course of bourgeois-democratic revolution. The second, later route—followed by Britain and most of its white-settler offspring (Australia, New Zealand, and Canada)—has passed through the transformation of trade-union militancy by economic crisis, state repression, and the rise of new working-class strata.⁷ In this section I will examine some of the most important reasons why the political terrain in the early American Republic was so unfavourable to the first of these processes.

In every European nation the working classes were forced to conduct protracted struggles for suffrage and civil liberties. The initial phases of the active self-formation of the European working classes encompassed both elementary economic organization and rudimentary political mobilization for democratic rights. Every European proletariat forged its early identity through revolutionary-democratic mass movements:

⁶ The solitary, synoptic analysis of the role of repression in deradicalizing the American labour movement is Robert Justin Goldstein's pathbreaking *Political Repression in Modern America*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1978. Burnham provides a fascinating overview of the specificity of American electoral institutions and their success in diluting working class political power in 'The United States: The Politics of Heterogeneity'. Finally, I have drawn on the work of Michel Aglietta to discuss the 'capital-logic' of American labour struggles in my '“Fordism” in Crisis', *Review*, Binghamton, Fall 1978.

⁷ Of course combinations of both paths are also possible as in the case of Britain which experienced first Chartism as a mass—and premier—revolutionary-democratic movement of the working class; then, after a long interlude of apparently successful incorporation of the proletariat within the two-party system, the rise of the Labour Party in response to the New Unionism, Taff Vale, war-time repression, etc.

Chartism in Britain (1832-48), the Lasallean and 'Illegal' periods of German labour (1860-85), the bitter struggle of Belgian labour for the extension of the vote, the battle against absolutism in Russia (1898-1917).

In the face of the treason or weakness of the middle classes, the young working-class movements were forced to carry on the democratic struggle through their own independent mobilization. Thus the strength of proletarian radicalism and the degree of its conscious self-reliance were conditioned by both the relative social power of the bourgeoisie and the extent to which the democratic revolution had been left 'unfinished.' In a general sense, we can distinguish three kinds of national contexts in which an original coalescence of economic and political class consciousness took place: 1. against a hegemonic bourgeoisie in the context of a restricted franchise (Britain or Belgium in the nineteenth century); 2. within the framework of an on-going bourgeois-democratic revolution (France in 1848-52); or (3) in the absence or impossibility of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, against both the pre-capitalist and bourgeois ruling classes at the same time (Russia in 1905-17—the pattern of 'permanent revolution'). The impetus of working-class militancy was different in each case, yet in all cases some mode of proletarian political independence (be it a nonviolent petitioning campaign or a centralized underground party) was a necessary prerequisite.

US Democracy: Merchants and Farmers

In the United States, on the other hand, a very different politico-juridical framework was present during the infancy of the working class. The most obvious fact, which impressed itself on every Old World visitor, was the absence of residual pre-capitalist class structures and social institutions. Indeed as the Hartzian school has emphasized, the Northern colonies were a transplanted 'fragment' of the most advanced production relations and ideological superstructures of the seventeenth century: British merchant and agrarian capitalism, Puritan religion, and Lockean philosophy. Long after their official suppression in Britain, New England popular consciousness safeguarded the radical doctrines of the English Revolution and continued to translate them into practice. By no later than 1750, for example, somewhere between one half and three quarters of the adult white males in New England, including much of the artisanal population, were already exercising a local franchise. By Andrew Jackson's second term in 1832, property qualifications had been removed in all but four of the states.³ Thus, in dramatic contradistinction to Europe, popular sovereignty (for white males) was the *pre-existent* ideological and institutional framework for the industrial revolution and the rise of the proletariat.

Another, almost equally important difference between Europe and America was the class composition of the leadership of the democratic

³ Cf. Edward McChesney Sait, *American Parties and Elections*, New York 1939, pp. 21-31; and Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage from Property to Democracy*, Princeton 1960.

movement. In Europe bourgeois liberalism had (at least until 1848) generally taken a position of adamant opposition to 'democracy.' Its strategic aim was to mobilize the plebeian masses against aristocratic power without thereby being forced to concede universal suffrage. The manipulation of the English working classes by the Whigs in reform struggles of the 1820s and early 1830s is a classic case. To the extent that the bourgeois revolution actually became a 'democratic' revolution, it was because elements of the plebeian strata (urban artisans, petty bourgeoisie, declassed intellectuals, supported by the multitudes of journeymen, labourers, and sections of the peasantry) violently assumed leadership, usually in the context of a life-or-death threat to the survival of the revolution or temporizing betrayal by the haute bourgeoisie (France in 1791 or Germany in 1849). Furthermore, by the 1830s surviving elements of this plebeian Jacobinism were rapidly being transformed, under the impact of industrialism, into a proletarian proto-socialism (Blanquism, the Communist League, etc.).

In the United States, by contrast, the commanding heights of the bourgeois-democratic 'revolution' were dominated, without significant challenge, by the political representatives of the American bourgeoisie. Thus, in a certain ironic sense, the American bourgeoisie (in a definition encompassing historically specific configurations of large merchants, bankers, big capitalist landowners or planters, and, later, industrialists) was the only 'classical' revolutionary-democratic bourgeoisie in world history: all other bourgeois-democratic revolutions have depended, to one degree or another, upon plebeian wings or 'surrogates' to defeat aristocratic reaction and demolish the structure of the ancien régimes.

This was partly a result of the fact that the 'bourgeois-democratic' revolution in America was not an uprising against a moribund feudalism, but rather a unique process of capitalist national liberation involving, in the period from 1760 to 1860, a multi-phase struggle against the constraints that a globally hegemonic British capital imposed on the growth of native bourgeois society. It is possible to see the Revolution of 1776, for instance, as very much a civil war against Loyalist comprador strata, and the Civil War as a continuing revolution against an informal British imperialism that had incorporated the cotton export economy of the South in an alliance of neo-colonial dependency. In the first phase a merchant-planter coalition overthrew the obstacles to internal expansion, and in the second, an alliance of fledgling industrial capital and western farmers created the preconditions for national economic integration.

Moreover the American bourgeoisie was able to rely upon exceptional class alliances to consolidate its hegemony. The existence in the United States of a numerically dominant class of small capitalist farmers—a class with virtually no equivalent in mid-nineteenth-century Europe where agriculture was predominantly operated by semi-aristocratic landowners or subsistence peasants—provided secure social anchorage for an explicitly bourgeois politics celebrating the sanctity of private property and the virtue of capital accumulation. Since the ideology of the industrial bourgeoisie found such direct resonance in the entre-

preneurial outlook of the majority of the Northern agrarian class, mass democratic politics did not pose the same kind of dangers as they did in most of Europe where the middle strata or petty bourgeoisie were so much weaker in the nineteenth century. In other words, while the European bourgeoisie had to fight long delayed actions (frequently in alliance with residual aristocracies) against the advance of a broad franchise which they feared would give power to workers and peasants, the industrial fraction of the American bourgeoisie, relying on the stabilizing social ballast of the farmers, was able to achieve national political dominance in 1860 at the head of the revolutionary-democratic crusade against slavocracy and its international allies.⁹

The Conservatism of the Democratic Movement

As Perlman noted many years ago, this particular constellation of historical factors—the existence of a ‘democratic’ bourgeoisie and the correlative absence of an ‘ancien régime’—made it much more difficult for artisans and workers to constitute themselves as an autonomous force in the politics of the antebellum era. The same factors also gave the democratic movement in America its relatively ‘conservative’ cast. In contrast with the anti-feudal revolutions of France or Spain, for example, there was no broad, radical assault on the legitimating institutions and ideology of society which might later serve as a model for working-class revolutionism. The plebeian colonial masses did not rise up under the leadership of their planter and mercantile ‘revolutionaries’ in 1776 to ignite a worldwide democratic revolution—as the *sans-culotte* followers of Saint-Just and Robespierre would aspire to do a few years later—but rather to defend the special gift of popular liberty that God and Locke had granted their Puritan ancestors. Similarly, in arousing the North in 1861, Lincoln and the Republicans vehemently rejected the revolutionary slogans of Garrison and the Abolitionists (the extension of ‘equal rights’ to Afro-Americans and the destruction of the slave order) to appeal, instead, to the ‘preservation of the Union and Free White Labour’. These ideological nuances have far more than incidental significance; they testify both to the solidity of bourgeois political domination and to the inhibition of ‘permanent democratic revolution’ in America.¹⁰

⁹ It should be noted, however, that the Southern planters exercised an analogous hegemony over the small white farmers of the Southern lowlands and plains. The cement of this ideological adhesion was not so much pseudo-aristocratic paternalism as a degenerate Jeffersonian liberalism. For all their manorial trappings, ‘ultras’ like Calhoun stood far closer to the radical Whig tradition than to high Toryism. Appeals to states’ rights and individualism were buttressed by the vision of a permanently expanding slave frontier that perpetually renewed the possibilities for small-scale accumulation and ascent into the big planter stratum. This white supremacist democracy of the Southern *Herrnvolk* mirrored many of the same central themes (e.g. entrepreneurial egalitarianism) as Northern capitalist ideology.

¹⁰ Marx’s theory of ‘permanent revolution’, it will be recalled, was an integral element in his strategic reflections on the dynamic of the failed German democratic revolution of 1848–1850. It projected the possibility that the revolutionary-democratic movement might, under certain circumstances, ‘grow over’ into a struggle for a ‘social republic’ led by an independent worker-peasant wing. More generally it pointed to the conditions that created the possibility of a hegemonic working-class jacobinism as a prelude to socialism.

'Producers' and 'Citizens'

All this should not be taken to mean that the artisanal or early industrial working classes in America were without clearly conceived interests or articulate voices of their own. Yet, without underestimating the economic militancy of the early working class or its devotion to the struggle against 'Oligarchy', it is necessary to emphasize the structural and cultural obstacles to any thoroughgoing radicalization of the democratic movement and to the crystallization of an autonomous proletarian politics. While American workers provided shock troops in defence of 'Equal Rights', they never created independent political movements with the influence or historical impact of Chartism or French socialism. The famous Workingmen's Parties of 1828-1832, which the young Marx celebrated as the first parties of labour, may seem an obvious exception. But the 'Workies' were a socially composite movement whose concept of the 'working man' had such catholic inclusivity that only bankers, speculators, and a few Tammany Hall bosses were doctrinally excluded. The working man's movement of the 1830s undoubtedly did focus and express the concerns of pre-industrial workers, strengthened impulses toward trade union organization, and trained labourers in the art of politics; but it never achieved more than the most preliminary level of political self-consciousness.¹¹

Incipient class consciousness was blunted by two illusions: one economic, the other political. The first grew out of the prevalence of petty production and small property which created, if not the fabled Jacksonian age of universal mobility, then at least a significantly greater fluidity of class boundaries between journeymen and the layer of small entrepreneurs. The result was an ideology of 'Producerism' that mapped class relations along an axis of 'producers' versus 'parasitic money power' and conflated all strata of workers and most capitalists into a single 'industrial' bloc. This petty-bourgeois outlook, constructed from the standpoint of the sphere of circulation rather than the labour process, did not really begin to break down until the great crisis of 1873-1877 brought capital and labour into confrontation on a national scale for the first time.

The political illusion, closely interwoven with a false perception of class relationships, was the popular view of the state as an agency of democratic reform. The existence of a unique and more or less unrestricted white manhood suffrage imparted to the Jacksonian working class a deep belief in the exceptionalism of American society. Unlike their European brothers who experienced both the absence of political and economic freedom, white American working men came to contrast their political liberty with their economic exploitation. In his study of the transformation of artisan shoemakers of Lynn (Mass.) into a dependent factory proletariat, Alan Dawley repeatedly emphasizes their persistent belief that they possessed 'a vested interest in the existing political system'. Whereas European workers tended to view the state as 'an instrument of their oppression, controlled by hostile social and economic interests, against which it was necessary to organize in

¹¹ Cf. Walter Hugins, *Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class*, Stanford 1960.

separate class parties; American workers tended to cling to the illusion of an ameliorative "popular sovereignty".¹²

The Struggle for Economic Self-Organization

Yet it would be foolish to overstate this point.¹³ The political 'incorporation' of native workers in the antebellum era had definite limits, and any attempt unilaterally to explain the deradicalization of the working class through the integrative powers of mass democracy must necessarily flounder on the contradictory implications of its own premises. Nineteenth-century labour history proved time and again that the very parliamentary illusions borne by the native working class also carried subversive potentials. In the face of increasing exploitation and class polarization, for example, the egalitarian ideology of American labourers (like the New England shoemakers) could become a powerful catalyst for collective organization (creating the New England Mechanics' Association), as well as for militant resistance (unleashing the Great Strike of 1860). European factory masters could frequently command ancestral patterns of lower-class deference and cultural subordination, but the American industrialists had to deal with 'free-born' Yankee workers who rejected paternalism and demanded to be treated as equals. From the Jacksonian period onward, the native working class ethos of 'Equal Rights'—so deeply ingrained by the mass upheavals of 1776, 1828, and 1861—came increasingly into collision with the emergence of the factory system and the concentration of economic power.¹⁴

Furthermore, these ideological tensions were amplified by the exceptional violence of the battle for union recognition in the United States. The precocity of working-class suffrage as an integrative force in America must be balanced against the great difficulty of Yankee trade unions in achieving durable organization. To make a comparison to the British case: if American workmen possessed an unrestricted vote over half a century earlier than their English counterparts, they also had to struggle almost a generation longer in the face of hostile courts and intransigent employers to consolidate their first craft unions. American labour may never have had to face the carnage of a Paris Commune or defeated revolution, but it has been bled in countless 'Peterloos' at the hands of Pinkertons or the militia.

It seems a tenable hypothesis, therefore, that widespread legal repression, especially when coupled with the impact of industrialism and

¹² Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1976, pp. 235, 237.

¹³ As I believe Alan Dawley does when he claims that 'the ballot box was the coffin of class consciousness'. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁴ Popular democratic tradition most dramatically asserted itself in the repeated justification of armed self-defence against 'tyranny'. Thus in the 1880s when some unions began to form their own 'militias' in response to employer and state violence, the *Labor Leaf* of Detroit could advise its readers that 'every union ought to have its company of sharpshooters . . . learn to preserve your rights in the same way your forefather did'. Richard Oestreicher, 'Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1877-1895', PhD Thesis, Michigan State University 1979, p. 280.

cyclical crisis upon mobility and wages, might undermine the working class's fundamental illusions in bourgeois political leadership. In this context it is relevant to recall the example of a *second path* toward working-class political independence represented by the labour parties of other 'democratic' Anglo-Saxon nations, particularly where this process has involved—as in Edwardian England or post-war Canada—the breakdown of previous political incorporation within bourgeois parties (primarily Liberal Parties). Certainly, to the extent that state repression or economic depression was a midwife to the birth of labour parties (a point that I will weigh again in the following section), late-nineteenth-century or early-twentieth-century America possessed the ingredients in full measure. Why then—despite several partial ruptures and temporary defections—did American labour fail to take advantage of broad suffrage to forge its own political instruments? The next stage in answering this question is to shift focus from the constitution of the political system to the historical composition of the working class.

II. Political Consciousness and Class Composition

The increasing proletarianization of the American social structure has not been matched by an equal tendency toward the homogenization of the working class as a cultural or political collectivity. Stratifications rooted in differential positions in the social labour process have been reinforced by deep-seated ethnic, religious, racial, and sexual antagonisms within the working class. In different periods these divisions have fused together as definite intra-class hierarchies (for example, 'native + skilled + Protestant versus 'immigrant + unskilled + Catholic') representing unequal access to employment, consumption, legal rights, and trade union organization. The real political power of the working class within American 'democracy' has always been greatly diluted by the effective disfranchisement of large sectors of labour: blacks, immigrants, women, migrant workers, among others.

Periodically in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the search for defensive organization at the workplace produced waves of mass struggle that temporarily overrode or weakened some of these divisions, and led to the formation of a succession of avowedly unitary economic organizations of the working class. But until the 1930s—and then only under the peculiar circumstances that I will analyse later—no comparable dynamic emerged on the political plane. The most victimized and disfranchised sectors of the working class had to seek political equality by their own efforts, and usually through incorporation within the multi-class coalitional base of one or other of the capitalist parties. To the discomfort of many Marxists as well as economic determinists of the Beardian school, all recent analysis of mass voting patterns in the US between 1870 and 1932 have corroborated the persistent primacy of *ethno-religious* cleavages as determinants of party loyalty and voting preference.¹⁵

¹⁵ The ethno-cultural interpretation of American voting behaviour was first proposed by Lee Benson in his major revisionist work, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case*, Princeton 1961. The most ambitious recent work in this genre, preparatory to an overall synthesis and marshalling a formidable array of the

This contradictory dialectic of class unification/class stratification, and the corresponding tendency toward the bifurcation or disarticulation of workplace and political consciousness, needs to be examined more concretely within the specific contexts of the three waves of mass struggle that stand out as the key phases in the formation of the industrial proletariat in America: 1. the early battles for trade unionism and a shorter working day, 1832-1860; 2. the volcanic postbellum labour insurgencies of 1877, 1884-87, and 1892-96; and 3. the great tide of strikes from 1909 to 1922, which was only superficially punctuated by the 1914-15 recession.

All periodizations are somewhat arbitrary and risk obscuring important continuities and causal linkages, but I believe that these three periods define integral generations of working-class consciousness shaped by common experiences of economic militancy, each culminating in crises that temporarily posed the question of independent political action. The problem at hand is to consider the roles of racism and nativism in preventing American workers from 'seizing the time' in the pivotal turning points of class struggle—above all 1856-7, 1892-6, 1912, and 1919-24—when political realignment seemed most possible and necessary.

Labour and the Civil War

The long decade from 1843 to 1856 was the crucible of an explosive mix of socio-economic transformations: the rise of mechanized consumer-goods industries in New England, the rapid capitalization of Midwestern agriculture, the acquisition of the Pacific Slope and the Southwest, and the fitful booms and expansionist demands of King Cotton. It was also an era of complex transition in the social structure. The new Western cities and towns still provided something of the famous 'safety valve' of social mobility, but the factory towns and great port cities of the Eastern seaboard witnessed the hardening of class lines and the constriction of opportunities for economic independence. The traditional artisanal working class, with its vague and fluid boundaries with the petty bourgeoisie, had become partially superseded by two new strata of workers: first, the emergent factory proletariat rooted in the shoe and textile industries of New England, and second, the nomadic armies of largely immigrant labour who moved across the face of the North building railways and digging canals.

latest quantitative weaponry, is Paul Kleppner's *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892; Parties, Voters and Political Cultures*, Chapel Hill 1979. A critical acceptance of the overwhelming evidence for the significance of this religious divide does not, of course, imply concurrence with the 'new political history's' interpretative tendency to marginalize class as a factor in American history. Whatever their theoretical pretensions, the current crop of historical voting studies only inflict fatal damage on an older Turner-Beard calculus of 'economic interest groups'. Rather than dispelling class struggle from centre-stage, these studies only challenge Marxists to theorize more rigorously the *refraction* of class differences through a singular American ethno-religious prism. Cf. Paul B. Johnson, *A Shepherders' Millennium*, New York 1978, and James E. Wright, 'The Ethno-cultural Model of Voting: A Behavioural and Historical Critique', in Allan Bogue (ed.), *Emerging Theoretical Models in Social and Political History*, Beverly Hills 1973.

In the *Sinew and Drang* of labour's infancy, romantic longings for imaginary past idylls coexisted with realistic intimations of the future. Time and again, in a pattern which would repeat itself almost to the eve of the twentieth century, the labour movement was deflected by utopian enthusiasms for monetary panaceas or free land schemes that would roll back industrialism and re-establish an ideally harmonized, 'Republican social order' of small producers. At the same time, however, more hard-headed militants, sensing the inevitability of economic change and influenced by the model of British labour, began to dig in for the long struggle. From the mid-1830s onwards, journeymen in the big port cities began to assert their separate economic interests, organizing their own benefit societies and early trade unions. Over the next two decades the centre of gravity of this union movement began to shift either to skilled workers in the new mechanized industries like the cotton spinners and shoemakers, or towards the craftsmen who made the machines, like the engineers, iron puddlers, and moulders. Unfortunately their efforts were rewarded by few permanent successes: the broad Ten Hour Day agitation of the 1840s rose and fell, a first generation of trade unions perished in the Panic of 1837, a second in the Depression of 1857, and, finally, on the eve of the Civil War, the most powerful trade union in North America—the New England Mechanics' Association (shoemakers)—was crushed after a long strike.

More important than this ebb and flow, however, were the residue of consciousness and embryonic class unity left behind, and the way in which this emergent 'labourism' fitted into the overall political conjuncture. As I have already indicated, the Jacksonian era had seen the rise within the labouring class of an awareness of the incompatibility of great concentrations of capital with the preservation of egalitarianism. This consciousness was only partially dissipated by the utopian fads and various Western booms. By the end of Jackson's second term, for instance, the New York 'Workies' resurrected themselves as the 'Locofoco' insurgency within the Democratic Party. Although Locofocoism represented the incorporation of the formerly independent 'workingmen's' movements into the regular party system, it also achieved a dramatic reorientation of both parties to 'labour' as a growing voting bloc. The attempt by President Van Buren—Jackson's chosen successor and the hero of the Locofocos—to establish a ten-hour day for federal employers was a symbolic concession to this new power.

Furthermore, by the 1850s an accumulation of conditions existed for a new and more coherent crystallization of working-class political identity. In many manufacturing towns the decline of the autonomous artisan was almost complete and the outlines of the new class structure were becoming increasingly apparent and disturbing. Thus, in her careful study of the industrialization of Newark crafts between 1800 and 1860, Susan Hirsch emphasizes that the 1850s were the watershed decade when inter-class mobility disappeared and 'the membership of the classes became fixed.'¹⁶

¹⁶ Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class*, Philadelphia 1978, p. 79.

Coincident with this consolidation of class divisions was the eruption of new ideological issues in national politics and the breakdown of old class alliances. In 1857, just as the old party system was decomposing against the background of guerrilla warfare in Kansas, a severe economic crisis brought massive joblessness and industrial unrest to Northern cities. This conjuncture of economic and political crisis would seem to have offered a propitious opportunity for American labour, or at least its advanced detachments, to project its own leadership in the political arena. In particular, it would seem to have been the moment for drawing together separate strands of democratic reform by uniting the dual issues of chattel and wage slavery.

The concept of such a *labour abolitionism* actually existed. Albert Brisbane, Robert Owen, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglas espoused it, Marx and Engels cheered it on from across the seas, a few militant workmen tried to realize it. But in the event it was a stillborn crusade. Despite the dramatic growth of the factory proletariat and the sharpening of the economic class struggle, no new workingmen's party or locofoco-ist insurgency emerged in the 1850s to constitute a 'labour wing' of the Lincoln coalition. And in the absence of a working class anti-slavery current, labour lost the chance to forge its own links of unity with the black masses of the South or to create its own revolutionary-democratic political tradition.

Labour's inability to become an independent political actor in the greatest national crisis in American history was due, in part, to the fact that the initial process of industrialization had tended to *fragment rather than unify* the working class. The 'workies' of 1829-34 were able to draw upon the commonality of their artisanal culture and a fused tradition of protestant-democratic nationalism. In the following decades, however, three powerful centrifugal forces acted to pull the labour movement apart just as the American Industrial Revolution was reaching its 'take-off' point.

1. The Urban-Industrial Frontier

The first force was the very unevenness of the process of industrialization and proletarianization in an American setting where economic growth occurred not only through a concentric deepening around original nuclei, but also and especially through a succession of sectional developments. The new Western industrial cities (for example, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Chicago after 1850) were built up almost overnight, with little continuity with pre-industrial traditions or social relations.¹⁷ This 'boomtown' characteristic of American industrialization meant that the labour movement in the United States, with the partial exception of New England valleys and the older Eastern port cities, arose without those deep roots in the artisanal resistance to industrialism which many historians have stressed as a determining

¹⁷ 'In most industrial regions west of the Alleghenies, the town did not precede the factory; the factory made the town' R.H. Tawney, *The American Labour Movement and Other Essays*, London 1979, p. 57.

factor in the formation of militant unionism and working-class consciousness. Moreover it was this expanding urban-industrial frontier—rather than the Turnerian agrarian frontier—with its constantly replenished opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurial accumulation that provided material sustenance for the petty-bourgeois ideologies of individual mobility that gripped the minds of so many American workers. American labourers—to a far greater extent than workers in European industrial nations—could vote with their feet against oppressive working conditions as, all too frequently, geographical mobility became a surrogate for collective action.

2. Nativism and the Cultural Division of the US Proletariat

The second centrifugal influence—and decidedly the most disastrous obstacle to labour unity in the 1850s—was the reaction of native workers to the arrival of several million impoverished Irish and German labourers who came in a flood after the European crop failures of the 1840s. These new immigrants provided the cheap labour power for the growth of New England factories as well as the armies of raw muscle for Western railroads and Pennsylvania coalfields. They were met by the universal hostility of a native working class which rioted against them, evicted them from workplaces, refused them admission into trade unions, and tried to exclude them from the franchise.¹⁸ Partly rooted in purely economic rivalries in the labour market (although modern labour historiography has uprooted the hoary old myth that the Irish arrived in New England textile mills as strike-breakers), the Yankee-versus-immigrant polarization in the working class also reflected a profound cultural antagonism that would hinder efforts at labour unity for more than a century. It would be easy to define this cleavage as a persistent opposition between native-Protestant and immigrant-Catholic workers; yet this antinomy does not sufficiently capture the complex nuances of how, on one hand, religion, ethnicity, and popular custom were concatenated into two rival systems—or, on the other hand, how they were integrated into the matrix of a global, and highly distinctive, American bourgeois culture.

Indeed the central paradox of American culture is that while Engels was correct when he labelled it the 'purest bourgeois culture', Marx was equally right when he observed that 'North America is pre-eminently the country of religiosity'.¹⁹ In the absence of a state church or aristocratic hierarchy, secularization was not a requirement for liberalism, and America did not experience the kind of 'cultural revolution' represented by jacobin anticlericalism in Europe. Nor did the American working class develop the traditions of critical, defiant rationalism which on the Continent were so vital in orienting the proletariat toward socialism and in establishing an alliance with the intelligentsia. Instead the industrial revolution in America went hand in hand with

¹⁸ The immigration of Irish Catholics went back to the late 1820s. By the end of the Jacksonian period there were already attacks on Boston convents and riots between rival Irish and native hand-loom weavers in Philadelphia.

¹⁹ Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', *Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 151.

the reinforcement of religious influences upon popular culture and working-class consciousness.²⁰

Religion and Sub-Cultural Corporatism

Protestantism, for instance, was not merely a majority religion in antebellum America; it was also directly constitutive of popular republican nationalism. As Rhys Isaac and others have shown, popular support for the American Revolution was the product of a 'double ideological eruption' as patriotic rebellion against Parliament was legitimated by the rise of a radical evangelicalism that translated the 'rights of man' through the idiom of perfectionist protestantism.²¹ This 'First Great Awakening' was followed by a 'Second', in the Jacksonian era, which provided the medium for the incubation of a series of Yankee moral crusades that ultimately converged in the Republican Party of the 1850s (abolitionism, free soil, and anti-popery). On one hand, this revivalism helped forge a more inclusive and homogeneous Northern Protestant nationalist identity. On the other hand, the renewal of pietism was a powerful means for establishing the social hegemony of the new industrial capitalists. Religious moralism was the most effective weapon against those arch-enemies of industrial discipline and high profits, 'drunkenness, spontaneous holidays, and inattention to work'.²² Like the analogous English Methodism, however, evangelical religion could be a two-edged sword, and working men could appropriate its egalitarian side to advocate good, Protestant justifications for trade unionism and the Ten Hour Day. But the salient fact, in any case, is that the evangelistic fires were stoking the pietism of the Yankee working class to a white heat at the very moment when Catholic immigrants began to flood Eastern labour markets (American Catholics multiplied from 663,000 in 1840 to 3,103,000 in 1860).

The Irish immigrants of the famine generation and their successors after 1850 were bringing with them to 'the most militant Protestant nation in the world'²³ a highly distinctive and energetic variant of Catholicism. Many labour historians have characterized the religion of the immigrants as a quintessentially conservative, if not 'feudal' institution, exhibiting the 'deepest continuity with traditions of the

²⁰ Moreover the power of religion in America has yet to wane. The US alone amongst major industrial nations experienced a powerful resurgence of religion in the post-war period; church affiliation, in fact, has climbed steadily throughout the twentieth century, from 43% in 1910 to 69% in 1960. According to recent surveys there are more than 45,000,000 'born-again' evangelical Protestants and Charismatic Catholics in the US today. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, New Haven 1972, pp. 951-952; Also Jeremy Rifkin (with Ted Howard), *The Emerging Order: God in an Age of Scarcity*, New York 1979.

²¹ Rhys Isaac, 'Preacher and Patriots: Popular Culture and the Revolution in Virginia', in Alfred Young (ed.), *The American Revolution*, DeKalb 1976, p. 130. Also Michael Greenberg, 'Revival, Reform, Revolution: Samuel Davis and the Great Awakening in Virginia', *Marxist Perspectives*, Summer 1980.

²² Cf. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, pp. 844-845; Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, pp. 135-137. Also Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* New York 1938.

²³ Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, cover note.

peasantry'.²⁴ But this confuses the ultramontane stance of Continental Catholicism, indissolubly tied to Metternichian reaction and the rear-guard defence of royalty, with the anti-monarchical and pro-republican Catholicism of the Irish lay poor. The fierce religiosity of the Irish immigrants to America was the product of a 'Devotional Revolution' in Ireland that followed in the wake of the defeat of the Revolution of 1789 and was closely associated with Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation Movement.²⁵ Furthermore, the vast majority of Irish immigrants were scarcely peasants in any rigorous sense of the term; rather they were sharecroppers, marginal tenants, agricultural labourers, and seasonal navvies fleeing the genocidal consequences of colonial underdevelopment. Their revived religion was fused with a republican nationalism that had very different political implications from those of Catholic piety in French or Spanish contexts.

The key point is that the American Catholic Church which these Irish immigrants largely created and dominated was, in any comparative estimate, in the van of adaptation to liberal capitalist society. In particular, its symbiotic ties with resurgent Irish Catholicism provided it with the twin traditions of a plebeian (indeed, working-class) clergy (in the 1940s Archbishop Cushing could boast to a CIO meeting that 'not a single Bishop or Archbishop of the American hierarchy was the son of a college graduate')²⁶ and an openness to democratic ideology via the original fusion of religion and Irish nationalism. Faced with the challenge of the Knights of Labour in the 1880s, it was also the first national Catholic church to undertake an interventionist role in the labour movement, preserving its ideological domination through sponsorship of an anti-radical right wing in the trade unions.²⁷

The ingenuity of American Catholicism, already becoming apparent in the 1850s, was that it functioned as an apparatus for acculturating millions of Catholic immigrants to American liberal-capitalist society while simultaneously carving out its own sphere of sub-cultural hegemony through its (eventually) vast system of parochial schools and Catholic (or Catholic-cum-ethnic) associations. This unique historical project embroiled the American Church in concurrent battles both against Vatican intransigents who opposed the rapprochement with 'modernity', as well as with the mainstream of American Protestantism which feared that the Pilgrim heritage was in mortal danger from the twin (and interrelated) evils of 'Rum and Romanism'.

²⁴ Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises*, New York 1973, p. 167.

²⁵ Cf. Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875', *American Historical Review*, June 1972; Bruce Francis Biever, S.J., *Religion, Culture and Values*, New York 1976.

²⁶ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, p. 1007.

²⁷ The hegemony of the 'modernist' wing of American Catholicism has only been secured through constant internal struggle, and it would be mistaken to underestimate the power of the conservative hierarchy at any particular point in its history. Nevertheless, the adaptive 'Americanizers' have been the real pioneers of the Church's social and political insertion into American life. Occasionally they have also been the catalyst of change in the broader world church as well. Thus the battle of Cardinal Gibbons and the Americanists against church reactionaries over the question of the Knights of Labor paved the way for the 1891 *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII which brought a 'truce' between the Vatican and the liberal and labour movements. In this sense 'christian democracy' was born in the United States. Cf. Henry J. Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor*, Washington D.C., 1949.

The important precision, therefore, is that it was not just immigration, nor even Catholic immigration, *per se* that was breaking down the cultural homogeneity of the Northern working class; but rather, from the late 1840s onward, the formation of *two corporatist sub-cultures* organized along a religious divide and operating through an enormous array of institutions and movements (ranging from the Womens' Christian Temperance Union to the Knights of Columbus). Furthermore each of these great cultural-religious blocs encompassed a myriad of ethnic, denominational, and sectional sub-alignments which, in turn, possessed their own spheres of relative autonomy.²⁸ The radical differences between the social and cultural universes of American and most Western European workers was not the presence of ethnic or religious division, but the manner in which a multiplicity of these differences was aggregated and counterposed on a national level across a single ethno-cultural axis. The institutional complexes of 'Protestant Nativism' and 'Catholicism' operated a complex mediation between ethnic and linguistic particularisms on one level, and the general framework of national bourgeois culture on another.²⁹ While they were in some sense parallel agents of *acculturation* (Catholic schools imparted American nationalism and respect for property just as effectively as Protestant-dominated public schools), they were also antagonistic structures of *assimilation* (ethnic groups tended to form alliances on denominational lines, ethnic exogamy remain religiously endogamous, etc.).

Cultural division was reproduced on a political plane in the 1850s. The restructuring of the party system that took place after 1854 reflected both the increasing sectional polarization and the new widening of ethno-religious cleavages in the working class. Thus working class nativism contributed to the formation of the virulently anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant 'American' or 'Know-Nothing' Party which temporarily became one of the most successful third-party movements in American history. By the middle of the decade the majority of the Know-Nothings fused with the Free Soil Party and a wing of the disintegrating Whig Party to form the new Republican Party. The rise of the Republicans clearly represented the triumph of the most aggressive Yankee small-capitalist strata, and the party's programme was a compelling synthesis of Protestant moralism, centralizing nationalism, and idealized entrepreneurial capitalism. Ironically, the Republican battle cry of 'free labour' had nothing to do with the rights of collective labour, but

²⁸ Ethnicity in America is, of course, as Glazer and Moynihan have emphasized, 'a new social form' not merely a 'survival from the age of mass immigration'. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge, (Mass.) 1963, p. 16. I would add, moreover, that to understand how specific ethnicities cohere and are reproduced it is essential to refer to the overall balance of class, religious, ethnic, and racial alignment. Thus in reaction to the immigration of Irish Catholics, Irish Protestants quickly became 'Scotch-Irish'. Later diverse communities of Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Slovaks, Poles, and Magyars—forced to band together against discrimination and exploitation—accepted a certain ethnic commonality as 'hunkies' despite their traditional divisions and antagonisms. Cf. Josef J. Barton, *Peasants and Strangers*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1975, p. 20.

²⁹ For some political historians, however, the most relevant antinomies are 'pletist' versus 'liturgist' as German high-church Lutherans in the Midwest tended to bloc with Irish and German Catholics against temperance and in support of parochial education. Cf. Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System*, p. 363.

rather evoked the dream of escape from wage labour through individual mobility.³⁰

The Catholic immigrants, in reaction, were driven into the Democratic Party, which offered a *laissez-faire* toleration of religious and cultural difference. The ensuing political split in the working class endured until the eve of the New Deal, and its consequences were devastating for the development of class consciousness. On one hand, native Protestant workers rallied to the leadership of their own bosses and exploiters, while the Catholic immigrants forged an unholy alliance with Southern reaction.³¹

3. Racism: The Unifying Theme

This account of the working class in the 1850's would be incomplete without discussing a third divisive force: racism. American democracy was, after all, the most spectacularly successful case of settler-colonialism and the correlative condition for 'free soil, free labour' was the genocidal removal of the indigenous population. Moreover, as Tocqueville observed, the antebellum North was, if anything, more poisonously anti-black than the South.

An already consolidated white racism tied to the myth of a future black flooding of Northern labour markets led most native workmen to oppose social equality and suffrage for black freedmen. From Boston to Cincinnati, the white lower classes periodically rioted, attacked communities of freedmen, hounded abolitionists, and imposed colour bars on their crafts. Northern blacks were everywhere excluded from the universalization of manhood suffrage in the 1820s and 1830s, and on the eve of the Civil War only four states in the Union allowed freedmen even a qualified franchise.³² Furthermore the rise of the Republican Party and massive Northern opposition to the extension of

³⁰ Cf. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, New York 1970.

³¹ In his well known study of Lynn, Massachusetts as a 'microcosm' of the industrial revolution in the USA, Alan Dawley has de-emphasized ethno-religious divisions in the working class as a cause of the defeat of class consciousness in the 1850s. Instead he has argued that it was the 'timing of events'—specifically the nationalist impact of the Civil War in the context of a profound commitment to democratic suffrage—which was responsible for the political incorporation of the native working class within the Republican party. Yet Lynn, as Dawley admits, was highly atypical, with 'a larger proportion of native-born workers than nearly every other major manufacturing centre in the state'. Had Dawley chosen other 'microcosms', he might have drawn different conclusions; as has Susan Hirsch, for instance, in her study of how ethno-religious conflicts in antebellum Newark brought the social order to 'ruins' in the 1850s and fatally split craftsmen into competing 'ethnic ghettos'. Dawley, *Class and Community*, pp. 238–239; and with Paul Faler, 'Working-class Culture and Politics in the Industrial Revolution: Sources of Loyalty and Rebellion', in Milton Cantor, ed., *American Working Class Culture*, Westport 1979, pp. 70–71; Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class*, pp. 106–107, 120–123.

³² At the outbreak of the Civil War only four states permitted Negroes to vote—New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York; and only in New York did they constitute as much as one per cent of the population. There were 149 Negroes in New Hampshire; 194 in Vermont. In practice few could vote in Massachusetts, because of the literacy test, or in New York, because of a property qualification applicable only to Negroes. Salt, *American Parties and Elections*, p. 42.

slavery contributed little to changing these prejudices. The young Republican Party carefully skirted or openly opposed the integration of blacks into Northern society; deportation to Africa, in fact, was the favourite solution. Although segments of the native white working class, especially in New England, eventually embraced abolitionism, they remained a minority whose opposition to slavery was most often framed within a pietistic religious ideology, rather than within a clear political analysis of the relationship between capitalism and slavery. Unfortunately more articulate and widely heard voices in the working class were those of 'labour leaders' and disgruntled Jacksonian radicals like Orestes Brownson or George H. Evans, who, in the guise of class politics, advocated an alliance of Northern labour with the slaveowners against 'capital'.

Amongst the immigrant proletariat, on the other hand, a section of the German workers possessed a more or less revolutionary understanding of the political implications of the slavery crisis for the future of American labour. They attempted to mobilize support for abolitionism, and denounced the efforts of pro-slavery demagogues like Herman Kriege and the *New York Staats-Zeitung*. But these 'Red 48s'—including the vanguard 'Communist Club' of New York—were ghettoized by language and their lack of understanding of the culture of American labour. Their heroic efforts had little impact upon the mainstream of the labour movement.

The Good Citizens of Pennsylvania

As for the Irish (already the bulk of the unskilled working class), in the 1840s William Lloyd Garrison had originated a bold strategy for building an alliance between Abolitionism and the contemporary movement in Ireland for repeal of the anti-Catholic laws. Unlike other Abolitionists, Garrison had sincere sympathies with the Irish and believed that the immigrant supporters of Daniel O'Connell in America could be rallied to a mutually beneficial united front. In response to solicitations from Garrison, the 'Great Liberator' (as O'Connell was popularly known) issued a series of ringing appeals for Irish solidarity with abolitionism: 'I want no American aid if it comes across the Atlantic stained in Negro blood'; 'Over the broad Atlantic I put forth my voice saying—Come out of such a land, you Irishmen, or if you remain, and dare countenance the system of slavery . . . we will recognize you as Irishmen no longer'.³³

O'Connell received a torrent of angry replies from American Repealers decrying his support for blacks. One letter came from an assembly of Irish miners in Pennsylvania. After denouncing his address as a 'fabrication' and warning that they would never accept blacks as 'brethren', the miners added: 'We do not form a distinct class of the community, but consider ourselves in every respect as CITIZENS of this great and glorious REPUBLIC—that we look upon every attempt to address us, otherwise than as CITIZENS, upon the subject of the abolition

³³ Gilbert Osofsky, 'Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism', *American Historical Review*, October 1975, p. 905.

of slavery, or any subject whatsoever, as base and iniquitous, no matter from what quarter it may proceed.'³⁴ The refusal of Irish miners in an anthracite hell-hole of eastern Pennsylvania not only to sympathize with the slaves, but to accept the implication—even from their own national hero—that they were in America anything less than 'CITIZENS', speaks volumes about the ideological impact of American 'exceptionalism' and the difficulties of building a class-conscious labour movement.

Thus, despite Garrison's and O'Connell's combined efforts, abolitionism failed utterly to stir the most exploited and outcast strata of the Northern working class. Although the Irish stood loyally by the Union in the Civil War (few as Republicans, most as 'Union Democrats'), anti-black racism grew as the rising cost of living combined with a class-biased conscription system to further increase the miseries of the immigrant ghettos and fuel the distorted perception that 'the blacks were to blame'. The great Draft Riot of 1863—the bloodiest civil disturbance in American history—exhibited the schizophrenic consciousness of the immigrant poor: their hatred of the silk-stocking rich and their equal resentment against blacks. Although attempts have been made to rationalize the sadistic attacks by the Irish on freedmen as the consequences of a desperate rivalry for unskilled jobs between the two groups, this analysis has lost ground in the face of growing evidence that blacks had already been excluded from most categories of manual labour and that the competitive 'threat' was totally one-sided—directed in fact *against* blacks.³⁵ Perhaps the racism of the Irish must be seen instead as part and parcel of their rapid and defensive 'Americanization' in a social context where each corporatist class culture (native-Protestant versus immigrant-Catholic) faithfully reflected through the prism of its own particular values the unifying settler-colonial credo that made them all 'CITIZENS'.

Labour and Populism

The economic crisis at the beginning of the Civil War, and the employer offensive that accompanied it, undermined most of the remaining trade unions. But when a new unionism emerged at the end of the war, the basis for common action between native and immigrant had been strengthened by their shared experiences and sacrifices on the battlefield. Somewhere between 500,000 and 750,000 workers, almost a quarter of the male proletariat, fought for the Union; given the discriminatory draft system, a disproportionate share were Irish and German immigrants. Moreover in the industrial boom that began in 1863 and lasted until 1873, many immigrant workers began to move out of the unskilled job ghetto in which they had been previously confined and into the construction crafts, metal trades, and other skilled sectors. At the same time new winds of revolution from Ireland

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 902.

³⁵ 'The old advocations, by which coloured men obtained a livelihood, are rapidly unceasingly and inevitably passing into other hands; every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived immigrant, whose hunger and whose colour are thought to give him a better title to place; and so we believe it will continue until the last prop is levelled beneath us' *Frederick Douglass's Paper*, March 4, 1853.

(the 1867 Fenian rising, the 1879-82 Land War) and Germany (Lasallism and the struggle for suffrage) were politicizing immigrant workmen in a more radical direction. Although violent echoes of antebellum ethno-religious conflict were still heard after Appomattox (New York's 'Orange Riots' of 1869 and 1870, the bloody feuding between 'Hibernians' and British miners in the Pennsylvania coalfields), the basic trend of the labour struggles in the postbellum generation was the growing unity of the working class at the workplace and its search for more effective forms of solidarity and trade union organization.

The Strike Waves of the Late Nineteenth Century

The Gilded Age opened an era of full-scale industrialization centred on the consolidation of a continental internal market and the growing mechanization of the capital-goods sector of the economy. The expansion of Western agriculture and railroads created an enormous appetite for machinery and iron products which was fed by the rise of a vast new industrial complex around the Great Lakes. By the end of Reconstruction, Chicago had surpassed Manchester as the world's greatest manufacturing metropolis while the American working class had almost doubled in size. Yet mass-production industries were still in their infancy and only a handful of factories employed more than a thousand workers. The railways were thus unique by virtue of their giant corporate size, financial resources, and enormous workforces. The railway working class, one million strong by the end of the century and alone possessing the capacity for coordinated national strikes, emerged as the 'social vanguard' of the entire American proletariat. It was no accident that the class struggles of each decennial business cycle between 1870 and 1900 culminated in national railway strikes supported by the riotous solidarity of hundreds of thousands, even millions of other workers and sympathetic small farmers. The Great Rebellion of 1877, the massive Gould system strikes of 1885 and 1886, and the epic Pullman Strike (or 'Debs Rebellion') of 1894: these were the flash-points of class struggle in late-nineteenth-century America.

Each of these strike waves reinforced attempts to build more broadly inclusive national labour organizations. As early as 1867, with the formation of the shortlived National Labor Union, the concept of a united workers' federation integrating both native and foreign-stock labourers had begun to win mass support. During the 1877 railroad strikes a previously clandestine and little-known movement—patterned after free-masonry to shield it from employer repression—called the 'Knights of Labor' emerged to lead struggles in a number of states. In 1885, striking Knights on the southwestern railroads defeated Jay Gould, the most powerful and wily robber baron of his day. As a result, unorganized workers everywhere turned toward the Order, whose membership grew to more than 700,000 in 1886. At the same time many unions began to affiliate; while of the remainder, the most important—including the crucial railway brotherhoods—were rapidly being pressed toward merger by rank-and-file sentiment. In a period when even the most skilled craftsmen had great difficulty maintaining union organization in the face of employer hostility and state violence,

it was widely accepted that only a vast, inclusive movement of the entire proletariat would constitute a sufficiently powerful framework of solidarity and mutual aid to allow component unions to grow and survive. The flexible structure of the Knights provided for this aid by developing a broad range of organizational forms, based on craft (National Trades Assemblies), industry (Special Assemblies) or locality (District Assemblies).

The Social Vision of the Knights

Beyond the mere economic organization of the toiling classes, however, the Knights aspired to a more profound vision. They tapped the well-springs of diverse labouring traditions (fraternalism, evangelicalism, 'equal rights', and mutualism) to nourish a network of solidary association which bound together workplace and community. A typical inventory of Knights-related organizations (in this case, Detroit 1885) would include: 'unions, Knights of Labor assemblies, Working-men's Club Rooms, cooperative stores and factorics, labour newspapers, singing societies, social clubs, political organizations, and a workers' militia (1)'.³⁶ But the invention that most clearly testified to the Knight's project of forging a *parallel proletarian civil society* was the Knights of Labor 'Court'. In his fundamental work on the Order's membership and internal organization, Garlock provides a description of this astonishing institution: 'Each Local Assembly had its own court whose officers were elected by the membership, in which Knights settled differences without recourse to the civil courts. Members charged one another not only with such violations of obligation to the Order as scabbing or accepting substandard wages, but for such violations of domestic obligation as wife-beating and desertion, for such violations of standards of social conduct as public intoxication or the failure to pay boarding bills'.³⁷ The embryonic class culture represented by the Knights not only transcended a 'pure and simple' trade union economism, but also provided the first alternative to dominant ethno-religious sub-cultures.³⁸ It has been estimated that at one time or another 100,000 to 200,000 individuals served as officers in Knights courts or local assemblies; any sampling of names reveals the landmark reconciliation of Irish, German, and native workers that the Order had achieved. The Knights also made the first serious effort to organize the female proletariat—appointing a full-time woman organizer—and a pioneer, though faltering attempt at integrating black labourers.³⁹ Thus to the enthusiastic Frederick Engels the rise of the Knights could be interpreted as nothing less than the American working class's first clear step towards becoming a 'class-for-itself': 'the first national organization created by the American working class

³⁶ Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, p. 123.

³⁷ Jonathan Garlock, 'A Structural Analysis of the Knights of Labor: A Prolegomenon to the History of the Producing Classes', University of Rochester, PhD Thesis, 1974, p. 7.

³⁸ The unity of the Knights of Labor was all the more significant in face of the powerful resurgence of anti-Catholicism in the 1880s as pietism responded to the surging Catholic birth-rate and the expansion of the parochial school system. Cf. Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System*, pp. 216–221.

³⁹ Garlock, *A Structural Analysis*, p. 21.

as a whole . . . the only national bond that holds them together, that makes their strength felt to themselves no less than to their enemies'.⁴⁰

The gospel of labour solidarity assumed a millenarian quality in the railway strikes and eight-hour-day demonstrations of 1886 as combined Knights and trade union membership reached a nineteenth century height. The world's first May Day touched off a spontaneous, month-long wave of mass marches, walk-outs, and quasi-general strikes which culminated in nationwide violence as newspaper headlines asked: 'THE REVOLUTION?'. In the wake of the defeat of the third anti-Gould strike, however, and of the repression that followed the Haymarket Massacre, the dizzy growth of the Knights was brought to a sudden halt, and, in an atmosphere of worsening relations with the unions and internal vituperations against the Powderly leadership, the Order began its long slide toward oblivion. The consequent fragmentation of the labour movement also undermined the survival of the various local 'labour parties' that flourished in the brief climax of Knights' power and working-class unity in 1885-86.

The Knights' Decline

The causes of the Knights' decline and the erosion of their cultural and political networks have long been an occasion of historiographic controversy;⁴¹ and without directly entering the lists, it is worthwhile to examine several factors which would persistently appear in later conjunctures as obstacles to unitarian class organization and consciousness.

The Knights' power on the railways, for example, was undermined by the defection of the Engineers whose brotherhood was bribed and pampered by railway barons grown keenly aware of the unique power of this group of workers to shut down the entire economy. After 1885 the Engineers, under the tight-wing suzerainty of Grandmaster Arthur, never again officially struck or came to the aid of fellow railway workers. The desertion of the Engineers' Brotherhood presaged the growth within the labour movement of a counter-trend towards a narrow and 'aristocratic' conception of organization.

Another problem illuminated by the crisis of the Knights was a developing symbiosis between labour leadership and the patronage machinery of the Democratic Party. The Knights' archives reveal

⁴⁰ Friedrich Engels, 'The Labour Movement in America', American Preface to *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Moscow 1977, p. 21.

⁴¹ The historiographic battlelines run roughly as follows: Those groomed in the 'Wisconsin' tradition of Commons and Perlman with its almost teleological conviction that Gompersism was the natural destiny of American labour have tended to view the Knights as an impossible dream—the last hurrah of an old 'utopian' reform tradition that clung to a classless ideology of 'producerism' and to the advocacy of petty-bourgeois panaceas like cheap money (Greenbackism) and producer co-operatives. Other scholars, including Marxists like Foner as well as the most recent generation of Knights' historians (Garlock, Ostreicher, etc.), have argued a contrasting view of the Order; agreeing, it is true, that the Knights were burdened by ideological dead weight, but emphasizing as Engels did that the far more important dimension of the movement was its profound impulse toward a class, rather than merely craft, solidarity.

scores of rank-and-file protests against the manipulation of the Order to bolster individual political careers. Master Workman Powderly, Democratic Mayor of Scranton (Pa.) and later (Republican-appointed) Commissioner of Immigration, was only the most famous of many examples. Indeed, David Montgomery, contrasting British and American conditions, has suggested that the 'most effective deterrent' in this period to the maturation of class consciousness and the creation of a labour party was precisely 'the ease with which American working men entered elected office'.⁴² The cooptation of individual labour leaders was facilitated by the revolution in American city government that occurred in the 1880s as an aspirant petty bourgeois of Irish—and occasionally German—extraction began to take municipal power from old 'brahmin' elites. Beginning with the victories of Irish mayoral candidates in New York (1880) and Boston (1884), the new politicians generalized a Tammany Hall model of political brokerage based on a captive Catholic working-class vote.⁴³ Local trade union leaders—especially in the Irish-dominated building trades—were often key links in cementing machine control and principal beneficiaries of political sinecures. The overall effect of this 'spoils system' was to corrupt labour leadership, substitute paternalism for worker self-reliance, and, through the formation of ethnic patronage monopolies, keep the poorer strata of the working class permanently divided. Finally it is important to recognize that this tendency towards the assimilation of labour leadership by local political regimes preceded by almost a generation the precipitation of a significant trade union bureaucracy *per se* (this would only develop on a broad scale with the rise of full-time 'walking delegates' and business agents after 1900).

New Perspectives: the AFL and the Farmers' Alliance

It would be mistaken, moreover, to see the collapse of the Knights after 1887 as the end of the wave of postbellum labour militancy. Indeed in the early 1890s the incipient trends toward the crystallization of a craft aristocracy within the working class and a bureaucracy within the trade unions were outstripped by the apparent radicalization of key sectors of labour. With the decline of the Knights much of the fighting energy mobilized in the eighties was simply transferred to the two new movements that claimed to provide more effective frameworks for labour solidarity. On the one hand, the American Railroad Union under the leadership of Eugene Debs expressed the continuing desire of the railway workers for an inclusive, all-grades organization. A prototype industrial union, it was widely welcomed as labour's most

⁴² David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, New York 1967, pp. 215 and 208–209.

⁴³ In explaining the decline of the previously militant labour movement in Troy, New York, Daniel Walkowitz attributes special importance to the rise of an Irish middle class that gradually expropriated the community leadership previously exercised by the well-organized and articulate iron moulders. 'Instead of the few petit bourgeois Irish shopkeepers... who were traditionally men of the worker community, a new middle class had emerged which consisted of professionals and entrepreneurs, or men of commerce. The latter's domination of the Democratic party, and their continued involvement with the workers in French-Canadian and Irish ethnic clubs and nationalist movements, began to diminish the working class base within the ethnic community and to shift ethnic allegiances to an inter-class axis.' Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Worker City, Company Town*, Urbana 1978, p. 260.

advanced response to the challenge of the 'trusts'. The American Federation of Labor, on the other hand, was still far from the conservative monolith of business unionism that it would one day become. The child of the historic agitation for the eight hour day in 1886, the early AFL was seen by its founders, many of them avowed socialists, as a more homogeneously proletarian organization than the Knights. At the time of Grover Cleveland's re-election in 1892, the AFL was still an embryonic coalition of national unions (including the Industrial Mineworkers), state federations, municipal trades councils, and independent locals. Its future structure and politics remained to be resolved by the conflict of ideological currents within it, including a rapidly growing socialist faction.

It was the Great Depression of 1893-96—the worst collapse of the nineteenth century—that forced the issue of the labour movement's political identity and sounded the depths of its internal unity and cohesion. The fighting will and consciousness of a whole generation of labour militants, matured over the long cycle of struggles and movements since 1877, was tested in the series of violent battles that culminated in the American Railroad Union's boycott of the Pullman Company in 1894. What was so remarkable about the Pullman Strike, distinguishing it as one of the three or four most climatic labour battles in American history,⁴⁴ was not only its escalation into a national confrontation between hundreds of thousands of workers and the federal government—this had also occurred in 1877—but, rather, its unprecedented conjunction with massive upsurges of native agrarian radicalism and international labour politics.

The birth of the Farmers' Alliance in the late eighties, in a period of falling crop prices and rising rents, had signalled a radicalization of agrarian protest in the United States. Whereas previous farmer movements, such as the various 'farmer parties' of the 1870s or the national Grange, had tended to represent the interests of more prosperous farmers, the Alliance derived an almost millenarian energy from its roots in the poorer strata of the rural population. Especially in the Southern cotton belt where the ancien regime had been recast into the debt servitude of the crop-lien system, the Alliance by its unprecedented feat of uniting black and white tenants had become a subversive force of revolutionary potential. Furthermore, in areas of the South and the Southwest an active cooperation had long existed between trade unions, local assemblies of the Knights and the Alliance. (A frequently overlooked fact was the dynamism of Southern trade unionism in the late eighties; New Orleans, in particular, had a powerful inter-racial trade union movement that made it a labour citadel by 1890.⁴⁵)

⁴⁴ The other watershed labour battles were the 1919 Steel Strike, whose defeat paved the way for the collapse of trade unionism in the 1920s, and the 1936-1937 General Motors Sitdown Strike which secured the first CIO beachhead in the mass production industries.

⁴⁵ Cf. David Paul Bennetts, 'Black and White Workers: New Orleans, 1880-1900,' University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) PhD Thesis, 1972; and Melton McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South*, Westport 1978.

The Rise of Labour Populism

After the dramatic entry of the Alliance into politics in 1892 as the Peoples' Party, grass-roots pressure began to build for a national farmer-labour coalition similar to what already existed in the Southwest. Labour Populism seemed to offer the unifying strategic vision and breadth of alliance that had been missing in the ephemeral labour parties that had briefly flourished in New York, Chicago, and Milwaukee in the aftermath of Haymarket and the 1885-86 strike wave. At the same time, Labour Populism seemed the natural American counterpart to the new working-class parties then emerging in Europe and Australia. The contemporary labour press reveals the keen interest with which American trade unionists followed the rise of European social democracy and Anglo-Australian labourism. Although German-American workmen were naturally most electrified by the successes of the SPD, it was the model of the Australian labour parties and the British Independent Labour Party that stirred the greatest excitement in the ranks of the AFL.

The Australian parties—the first *trade union* rather than socialist political parties in the world—were a direct outgrowth of the great Maritime and Queensland shearers' strikes of 1890-91. Although craft unionists had been the first to seek political representation, it was the impetus of the new, mass unions of pastoral workers, dockers, and miners—reacting to economic depression and government repression—that ruptured the bourgeois domination of the political arena and gave the new parties their initial strength. Similarly in Britain, Keir Hardie's Independent Labour Party (whose influence was generally exaggerated by its Yankee enthusiasts) was particularly oriented to the New Unions, which were most vulnerable to the increasing attacks on trade union rights by the courts and House of Lords. It was, therefore, not surprising that it was a coalition of socialists and industrial unionists (especially the fledgling United Mine Workers) who lobbied within the AFL for independent labour political action as a riposte to government strike-breaking. At the 1893 AFL convention, they succeeded in winning majority support for an eleven-point political programme copied from the platform of the British ILP (including a famous 'plank ten' which called for 'collectivization of industry'). The convention forwarded the programme to constituent unions for membership ratification.

At the same time, Chicago emerged as the national centre of the experiment of uniting Populism and the new labour radicalism. Even before the depression, police persecution and municipal corruption had revived Chicago labour's interest in independent politics. Then, in the face, first of government suppression to the 1894 Coal Strike, immediately followed by federal intervention against the Pullman strikers, the current of interest broadened into a mass movement. The embattled national miners' and railroad unions together with the Knights of Labor endorsed the Populists, while at a tumultuous conference in Springfield called by the Illinois Federation of Labour, a broad spectrum of unionists, insurgent farmers, and middle-class radicals met to consider the formation of a state-wide People's Party.

Against the dramatic background of Deb's imprisonment and the crushing of the Pullman Strike, the delegates unified around a Populist banner and on the basis of an amended version of the eleven point ILP platform. The key architect of farmer-labour unity at Springfield was the famous muck-racker and Fabian socialist, Henry Demarest Lloyd, whose avowed strategy was to make Illinois Labour-Populism the 'spearhead of the movement to transform the Peoples' party into the American counterpart of the ILP'.⁴⁶ Indeed, spurred by the tireless efforts of local socialists, trade unions throughout the neighbouring states of Wisconsin and Minnesota also joined the Populist crusade while simultaneously ratifying the proposed eleven points for the AFL. Lloyd was so sure that the momentum towards Labour-Populism was growing invincible that he asked Gompers to call a national conference to form a united front for the fall elections.

Gompers, on the other hand, was equally determined to defeat the socialist challenge within the AFL and to 'restrict and terminate the alliance between organized labour and Populism'.⁴⁷ His allies included not only the more conservative craft unions, but also the right wing of the populist party. By 1894 a more conservative and anti-labour bloc of wealthier farmers from the Great Plains states ('a shadow movement imitative of populism but without organic roots in the Alliance network and its political culture') was beginning to displace the leadership of the radical Southern and Southwestern Alliance men.⁴⁸ With the financial resources of the silver interests (the 'American Bi-Metallic League') behind them, the Midwesterners hoped first to reduce the populist programme to the single issue of free silver, and then to manoeuvre a fusion with the silverite wing of the Democratic Party. Their distaste for the radical Labour-Populism represented by the Springfield platform coincided with Gompers's.

The Debacle of the Nineties

The defeat of Labour-Populism was a tragi-comedy in several acts. First, at the 1894 Denver convention of the AFL, Gompers, supported by the conservative building trades, succeeded in preventing adoption of the ILP programme, despite evidence of its endorsement by a majority of the rank and file. The AFL's repudiation of the eleven points then provided a perfect excuse for moderate agrarians and corrupt 'machine' trade unionists in Illinois to foment a split with the Populist left wing. Many of the disillusioned socialists, in turn, followed Daniel De Leon's sectarian advice and returned to the isolated advocacy of 'chemically pure' revolutionary programmes. Finally, after a bitterly contested battle between the Midwestern and Southern wings of the Populist Party in July, 1896, the progressive Omaha Platform (with its several pro-labour planks) was scrapped for the sake of free silver quackery and fusion with the Democrats. The subsequent presidential

⁴⁶ Chester McArthur Destler, *American Radicalism, 1865-1901*, New London 1946, p. 213.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 183; also J.F. Fynn, 'AF of L Leaders and the Question of Politics in the Early 1890s', *American Studies*, 7, 3.

⁴⁸ David Montgomery, 'On Goodwyn's Populists', *Marxist Perspectives*, Spring 1978, p. 169.

election—which a year or two before had promised to be the dawn of a new era of farmer-labour political independence—demolished all third-party hopes and ushered in, instead, a generation of Republican-big business hegemony over national politics.

Underlying the debacle of 1896, however, was more than simply the successful conspiracies of Gompers and the conservative Populists to derail a radical farmer-labour coalition. Even when full allowance is made for the demoralization and confusion created by the infighting within the AFL and the Populist party, a great discrepancy remains between the radicalism of the veteran trade union militants—Debs, McBride, Morgan, etc.—and the apparent apathy or indifference of the majority of the urban and still predominantly unorganized working class. Despite the fact that Chicago in the midst of the depression was frequently described by contemporary observers as a city ‘trembling on the brink of revolution’, the Labour-Populists won only about 20% of the potential labour vote (40,000 out of 230,000) at the height of their influence in 1894 in the wake of the Pullman Strike. Moreover, in a pattern of regional exceptionalism that would be mirrored again in the twentieth century, the movement for an independent labour politics failed to grow in the other major urban-industrial centres outside of the Chicago-Northwestern area.

Were there not, therefore, other, more profound forces acting to disrupt the advance of Labour-Populism and to deflect the development of American labour from the path traced by British and Australian labour parties?

The Racist-Nativist Backlash

Two factors stand out most clearly. First, the united rebellion of the Southern yeomen and farm tenants—the cutting edge of agrarian radicalism—was broken up by a violent counter-attack of the regional ruling class which counterposed ‘Jim Crow’ and redneck demagogism to the Farmers’ Alliance and inter-racial cooperation. A vicious panoply of black disenfranchisement, racial segregation, and lynch terror was installed in the nineties to suppress militant black tenants, to keep them tied to the land, and to prevent their future collaboration with poor whites. At the same time the defeat of the great New Orleans General Strike of 1892 destroyed the vanguard of Southern labour and wrecked inter-racial unity between workers. Out of its ashes arose a stunted, Jim Crow white unionism on one hand, and a pariah black sub-proletariat on the other.⁴⁹ These twin defeats of Southern tenants and workers were decisive in allowing merchant-planter reaction to block the development of a free labour market, and in freezing the Southern economy for more than half a century in the disastrous mould of a servile cotton monoculture.

Secondly, this Southern counter-revolution was paralleled north of the Mason-Dixon Line by a resurgence of nativism and ethno-religious conflict within the industrial working class. In the bleak depression

⁴⁹ Bennetts, ‘Black and White Workers’, pp. 554–55.

days of the mid-nineties, many native as well as 'old' immigrant workers came to believe that burgeoning immigration was creating a grave competitive threat. (Symbolically, 1896 was the first year that Eastern and Southern European immigration exceeded that from Northwestern Europe.) Simultaneously, in response to the political successes of Irish Democrats in the elections of 1890 and 1892, there was a resurgence of the militant anti-Catholicism led by the American Protective Association (a predominantly Scotch-Irish group that blamed the collapse on the 'flood of immigrants unloosed on America by papal agents') and the 150,000-member United American Mechanics.⁵⁰ Fatally for the hopes of labour radicals, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic prejudice rent the unity of even those industrial unions, the miners and the railway workers, who were ostensibly the bed rock of the new Labour-Populism: 'Protestants were warned to avoid all unions dominated by papists, to discard the strike as a useless device, and to place no confidence in free silver. This advice made so strong an impression that Eugene Debs, the militant labour leader, and Ignatious Donnelly, the fiery Populist, called the APA an instrument designed by the railroad magnates to disorganize labour unions. In fact, APA-ism did have a disruptive impact on unionism, and not only among railroad employees. In the coalfields of Pennsylvania and Illinois this internecine strife checked a UMW organizing drive; in many cases it tore existing locals apart.'⁵¹

The populist movement itself did little to allay the fears of the immigrant proletariat or to arrest the increasing polarization within the ranks of the 'producing classes'. Its cultural style was definitely evangelical while its strong affinities for prohibitionism and state education reproduced classic nativist motifs. This may partially explain why so many foreign-born workers in the Midwest spurned Labour-Populism at the very moment when they were moving away from the party of Cleveland and 'hard times'. Although the Republicans (briefly in 1896 the *less* nativist of the two parties) ultimately captured an important segment of this alienated Catholic working-class vote, an even larger part retreated from electoral participation entirely. The election of 1896 thus marks a profound mutation in American political culture. At a time when the European proletariat was becoming more politically engaged than ever before, the American working class was undergoing a striking electoral *demobilization* as a result of the nativist backlash (particularly the agrarian capture of the Democratic Party) and of new restrictions on the popular suffrage (black disenfranchisement, poll taxes, and residency requirements). This combined process of exclusion/abstention dispersed the working-class vote while simultaneously creating a huge 'gap'—absent proletarian voters whom every third party movement of the twentieth century would seek to identify and mobilize.⁵²

⁵⁰ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, New York 1974, p. 81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵² 'The large decline in participation after 1900 and the exceptional working-class abstention rate today very much resemble a gap in the active American electorate that was filled elsewhere by socialist parties.' Walter Dean Burnham, 'The Politics of Heterogeneity', p. 679.

Finally it must be noted that the renaissance of ethno-religious and racial conflict at the end of the nineteenth century was intimately connected with a far-reaching transmutation of popular ideologies. In the face of the race terror in Dixie and the demands of US expansionism in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the old popular nationalism framed by Lincolnian Unionism was being remoulded into an xenophobic creed of 'Anglo-Saxon Americanism' based on social darwinism and 'scientific racism'.⁵³ The coincidence of this ideological torsion within popular culture with the second major recomposition of the American working class, fed by the new immigration, provides a context for understanding the increasing rightward shift of the AFL after 1896 towards Jim Crow unions, immigration restriction, and narrow craft exclusivism. Although trade unionism for the first time survived a serious depression, the later nineties were reminiscent of the 1850s, by reason of the intensity of the working-class dissension and fragmentation as Protestant was again mobilized against Catholic, white against black, and native against immigrant.

The Failure of Debsian Socialism

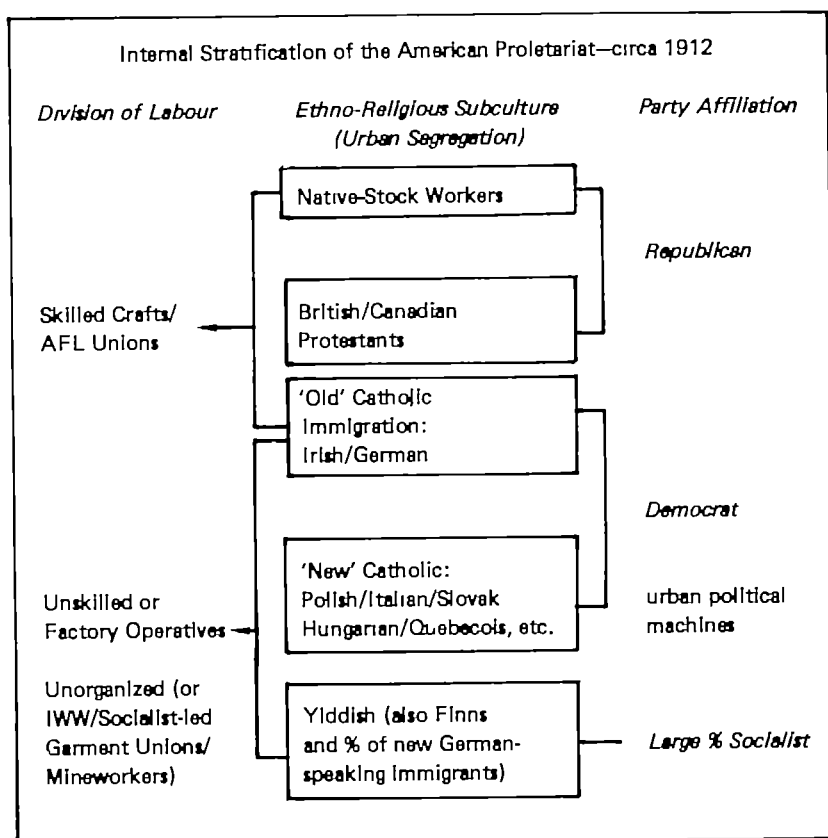
1. The Splintered World of Labour

The new immigration, like the old, provided super-exploited gang labour for extractive industries, domestic service, and construction. It also provided on a rapidly expanding scale the armies of machine operatives and semi-skilled labourers required by the dramatic growth, from 1898 onwards, of the trustified mass-production industries. By 1914, when Henry Ford began to create his 'brave new world' of assembly production at his Highland Park (Michigan) Model-T plant, the majority of this enlarged proletariat were foreign-born workers, more often than not politically disenfranchised and segregated—by poverty or deliberate discrimination—into slum areas apart from the native working class. The new coalescence of ethnicity, religion and skill produced the differentiated hierarchy depicted below (p. 34).

The origins of this hierarchy require some comment. In the first place it is important to challenge the common assertion that immigration *per se*—'hordes of peasants'—created an unmeltable and culturally backward heterogeneity that made class unity impossible.⁵⁴ Indeed the new immigrants brought a vast array of parochial kin and village identifications with them from the old country. But the *conscious decision* to forge larger ethnic solidarities as the basis for communal organization in America was most often a defensive reaction to exclusion and victimization in the new country. In other words, class and ethnicity

⁵³ 'Never have patriotism, imperialism, and the religion of American Protestants stood in such fervent coalescence as during the McKinley-Roosevelt era.' Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, p. 880.

⁵⁴ Such is the gist of the so-called 'Handlin-Hofstadter thesis.' Cf. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, Boston 1951, p. 217 ff.; Eric Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, New York 1955, pp. 180-184; also Aronowitz, *False Promises*, p. 164; Gerald Rosenblum, *Immigrant Workers*, New York 1973, esp. pp. 151-154; and Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History*, New York 1976, pp. 68-69.



were often the bases of alternative survival strategies, and the actual impact of immigration depended greatly upon the strength and inclusivity of existing class institutions.

This point is brought out neatly by John Cumbler's contrast of the labour movements in the cities of Lynn and Fall River, Massachusetts. Lynn possessed one of the oldest and strongest trade union traditions in America, and its working class was unified by a highly integrated relationship between leisure, work, and the home. Fall River, on the other hand, lacked such cohesive class-based community institutions, and its workforce was decentralized among relatively isolated work and residential areas. In Lynn, where the new immigration was a small, steady flow, the new arrivals were assimilated into the larger, unitary working-class community. In Fall River, in contrast, the arrival of large numbers of Portuguese and Poles at the turn of the century was greeted with nativist hostility and led to 'community fragmentation into separate ethnic units of social activity'.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ John T. Cumbler, *Working-Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure, and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880-1930*, Westport 1979, p. 8.

Unfortunately most of industrial America was more like Fall River than Lynn. Whereas the Western European class struggles of the 1880s and 1890s had spun a web of integrating proletarian institutions (ranging from workmen's clubs, cooperatives, and 'labour churches' to *casas del pueblo* and workers' educational societies), the US labour movement of the late nineteenth century, as we have seen, failed to generate a working class 'culture' that could overcome the ethno-religious alignments outside the workplace.

The Impact of the New Division of Labour

Meanwhile, inside the workplace itself, a profound recomposition of the division of labour was reinforcing and overdetermining the effects of the new immigration. The introduction of new mass-production technologies went hand in hand with a corporate assault on the power of skilled labour. This offensive began on a systematic scale with the Carnegie Company's defeat of the powerful Homestead lodges of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in 1892, and continued for thirty years until the defeat of the railway 'systems federation' strike in 1922 established the supremacy of the open shop. As industrial management broke the power of craftsmen and diluted their skills, however, it carefully avoided 'levelling' them into the ranks of the semi-skilled. Precisely to avoid such an explosive homogenization of status, the companies wooed demoralized skilled workers with piece-rates, bonuses, savings schemes, and 'profit-sharing'. Where craftsmen had traditionally seen themselves as the natural leadership of the labouring class, the corporations now promoted new social norms—especially the 'pride' of home ownership and membership in patriotic associations—that encouraged symbolic assimilation with the petty bourgeoisie. Drawn primarily from native and old-immigrant backgrounds, the skilled workers were purposely mobilized as an indispensable buffer against the organization of the unskilled.

The new immigrants, in turn, were 'frozen' into the ranks of the unskilled. The frenetic geographical mobility of the newcomers—as they were ceaselessly uprooted by the tides of the business cycle or returned home with their small savings—contrasts with their increasing rate of occupational immobility. In one carefully studied Slavic steeltown, for instance, the rate of upward mobility on the job ladder underwent a drastic decline from 32% in 1888 to only 9% in 1905.⁵⁶ Moreover within the plants themselves, the labour process was increasingly organized on the basis of ethnically and linguistically segregated work-groups supervised by unsympathetic native craftsmen or foremen. Again, however, the impact of the heterogenization of the workforce depended on whether or not a unifying counter-force of trade unionism existed. In the coalfields of Pennsylvania, for example, the industrially organized Mineworkers succeeded after long struggles in forging a polyglot labour force into a militant membership. In those fiefdoms of 'industrial feudalism' (the steeltowns of Pennsylvania), on the other hand, where the craft unions had been crushed between 1892 and 1901, the workers seemed much more hopelessly divided.

⁵⁶ John Bodnar, *Immigration and Industrialization*, Pittsburg 1977, p. 56.

The Ethnic Segregation of the Cities

This industrial caste system was mirrored by the rigid segregation and fragmentation of working-class residential life. By 1910 the American industrial city had developed a strikingly different social physiognomy from that of European factory centres. On both continents the building of street-car systems and elevated/underground railways had given powerful impetus to increasing spatial segregation. In Europe this took the form of further class polarization as proletarian 'east ends' and red *arrondissements* glared across a widening social-spatial gulf at bourgeois 'west ends' and fashionable *faubourgs*. In the United States, by way of contrast, increasing class segregation of housing was overlaid by simultaneously expanding ethnic differentiation. Thus Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburg all acquired after 1890 a characteristic *tripartite* spatial division between (1) middle-class suburbs, (2) a zone of decent, older housing (often single-family) occupied by native workers and some 'old' immigrants, and (3) an inner core of tenements, shabby apartments, and overcrowded boarding houses that provided dormitories for the new immigrant proletariat. Further transposed upon the belts of working-class residence was a grid—almost microscopically detailed in some cities—of ethnically and linguistically differentiated neighbourhoods, 'each with an institutional life of its own'.⁵⁷

Mediating this complex residential and workplace polarization between the native/skilled and immigrant/unskilled workers, were the 'old' foreign-stock Catholic workers, Irish and German. This intermediary stratum, particularly its Irish component, held an ambivalent but pivotal place within the internal structure of the working class. On one hand, the Irish were partially integrated into the more privileged segment of the proletariat by their successful penetration of the skilled trades and by their disproportionate weight in the emergent trade union bureaucracy. (Karson has discovered, for example, that no fewer than 62 AFL unions had Irish Catholic presidents in the 1906–1918 period.⁵⁸) Many of them also lived in the same 'better off' neighbourhoods with the native skilled workers. On the other hand, they were linked to the new immigrants by economic status—since a majority of the Irish (especially the new arrivals) were still in 1910 unskilled labourers or transport workers—as well as by their domination of the two central institutions upon which most new immigrants were vitally dependent: the Catholic Church and the Democratic patronage machines in most industrial cities.

Finally, standing outside of the principal sub-cultural alignments of the working class were several exceptional groups of Central and Eastern European immigrants. Although every nation sent its exiled radicals across the Atlantic, the predominant languages of Marxism

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 14; also O. Zunz, 'Detroit en 1880: espace et ségrégation', *Annales*, 32, 1, January–February 1977; Josef Berton, *Peasants and Strangers*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1975, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Marc Karson, *American Labour Unions and Politics: 1900–1918*, Carbondale 1958, pp. 221–224.

in America have been German and Yiddish.⁵⁹ The employer's blacklists and Bismark's antisocialist laws forced new generations of German-Lassalleans, anarchist followers of Jonathan Most, and Marxists to follow the footsteps of the 'red 48ers' who had emigrated to the United States. In the late nineteenth century these revolutionary German workmen—from whose ranks came the Haymarket martyrs Spies, Engel, and Fischer—created their own extraordinary German-speaking cultural apparatus of gymnastic societies, rifle clubs, educational circles, and socialist beer-gardens. They also played the major role in building such important unions as the Brewers, Cigar Makers, and Bakers. For several generations they were the left wing of the labour movements in Chicago and St Louis, but without question their greatest accomplishment was making Milwaukee the strongest citadel of socialism in America from 1910 to 1954.

The other great concentration of immigrant radicalism was the Lower East Side of New York where a million Jewish and Italian immigrants were crammed into the densest tenement district in the world. One of the unexpected after effects of the Russian Revolution of 1905 was to provide the Lower East Side with an exiled cadre of brilliant young labour Bundists and Jewish Social Democrats. In a remarkably few years they had organized a mass base of fifty thousand or so Yiddish-speaking socialist voters who crusaded for garment unionism and provided the backbone of left-wing opposition to Tammany Hall.

2. The Twin Souls of American Socialism

The aspiration of Debsian socialism was to unify and represent this divided and culturally multiform American proletariat. In the wake of the Panic of 1907 and the Supreme Court's draconian attacks on trade unionism (the Danbury Hatters' and the Buck's Stove and Range cases—the American equivalents of Taff Vale), there was a powerful surge of working-class votes towards the Socialist Party, despite Gompers's attempt to steer labour into a *de facto* alliance with the Democrats. Yet by the high point of 1912 the party was being torn apart by internal schisms and ideological divergencies. The crisis of the party, of course, had many causes, but above all it reflected the contradictory dynamic of the class struggle in the Progressive era.

The years between 1909 and 1913 marked a watershed in the history of the international labour movement. In the United States, as well as in Britain, Germany, France and Russia, they saw the outbreak of violent 'mass' strikes and the entry of new strata of unskilled workers into the class struggle. Beginning with the rebellion of immigrant steel workers in McKees Rock (Pennsylvania) and sweated New York garment workers (the Shirtwaist Strike) in 1909, the supposedly 'unorganizable' immigrant proletariat erupted in militant upheaval. Supported by the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist organizers of the

⁵⁹ The third language would probably have been Finnish. Far-left Finnish labourers left their indelible mark across the Northwest from the Mesabi Iron mines to the Astoria fisheries, and the Finnish Socialist Federation organized a unique mass emigration of loggers and miners to the Karelian Soviet Republic in the early 1920s.

garment unions, the new workers launched strike after strike across a spectrum of mass-production industries from textile to auto. Simultaneously the AFL—already hard-pressed by the so-called ‘Employers’ Mass Offensive’ of 1903–1908—had to fight bitter, rearguard battles against the degradation of their crafts by dilution, ‘Taylorism’, and speed-up. The longest and most epic of these struggles was the spectacular forty-five month fight of the railway shop crafts against the introduction of scientific management on the Harriman lines in 1911–1915.

Labour’s ‘Civil War’

Unlike the strike waves of the 1877–1896 period, however, the mass strikes of the early twentieth century largely failed to unify native and immigrant workers. Failing a convergence between the defensive fights of skilled labour and the organizing campaigns amongst the new immigrants, the movements tended to assume divergent and all too frequently antagonistic postures. Indeed the split within the working class became so profound that some Socialist writers regularly wrote of the ‘civil war’ in labour’s ranks, while rww organizers complained that the AFL unions were deliberately undermining and sabotaging the strikes of the immigrant proletariat.

This discord between the struggles of the craft unions and unorganized immigrants was carried into the Socialist Party in the form of a conflict between its reformist and syndicalist wings. The reformists, led by Victor Berger from his German Socialist bastion in Wisconsin, were committed to a programme of Bernsteinian gradualism exemplified by the mild civic meliorism and sporadic criticism of Gompers’s leadership of the AFL. They possessed no strategy or visible commitment to the unionization of the unorganized, and were generally indistinguishable from the AFL mainstream in their support for racist immigration restrictions. Berger, moreover, was a declared white supremacist. As for the attitude of the right wing toward the new immigrants, Sally Miller provides this characterization of the ‘model’ Milwaukee party: ‘While theoretically it was deplorable that organized labour was restricted to the skilled, in practice the Milwaukee socialists were comfortable with skilled German union men and scornful of unskilled new immigrants. The partnership they envisioned with labour was one of Germans and natives almost exclusively.’⁶⁰ In contrast, the socialist left wing—many of whom angrily withdrew from the party after Big Bill Hayward was purged in 1912—adopted an almost exclusively industrial perspective that focused on the allegedly immanent revolutionary potential of the immigrant and unorganized workers. They repudiated the AFL as a hopeless cause and concentrated their energies in building the One Big Union. Although these left socialists played invaluable supporting roles in the wave of immigrant strikes in basic industry, their syndicalism proved to be only a temporary tactical palliative for the needs of the unorganized factory proletariat. The rww could exemplify fighting solidarity at the workplace

⁶⁰ Sally Miller, ‘Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labour’, in Bruce Stave (ed.), *Socialism and the Cities*, Port Washington 1975, p. 45.

but it had almost nothing to say about the political problems of slum communities caught up in complex dependencies upon the power of church and patronage. It is not surprising that of the great strikes of this period, with the exception of the campaign of the New York garment unions, none left either durable union organization or led to any local victories for socialist candidates.

The Failure of the Socialist Party

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that neither of the two major tendencies of American socialism in 1912 offered a realistic strategy for uniting the working class or coordinating trade union strategy with socialist intervention in the urban political arena. The reformists had no plan for building industrial unionism, while the revolutionaries saw no point in attempting to influence skilled workers or in contesting Gompers's domination of the AFL. Similarly, neither the 'sewer socialism' of the right (whose municipal programme was often—as Walter Lippman pointed out—indistinguishable from progressivism) nor the apoliticism of the syndicalist left met the need for a socialist political solution to the urban crisis and the plight of the slum proletariat. At every level the strategic perspectives of American socialism remained contradictory, embryonic, and unsynthesized.

On an organizational plane, the party never really attempted to meld its different social components into an organic whole; in reality American socialism remained a series of ethnically and linguistically segmented socialisms. Thus the most important socialist electoral strongholds were ethnically homogeneous constituencies: Germans in Milwaukee, Scandinavians in Minneapolis, Jews in Manhattan, Pennsylvania Dutch in Reading. Furthermore the leadership of the party kept the separate language organizations of the smaller ethnic socialisms at a distance from one another and from the levers of power within the party: 'The immigrant socialists were the Party's transmission belt to the new immigrant workers. But the Party never set this transmission belt in motion. Instead, partly motivated by nativism and racism and worried by their politics, it kept these immigrant socialists adrift, failing to integrate them.'⁶¹

Perhaps the gravest failing of the party, however, was its utter inability to penetrate the core of the industrial working class: the old and new Catholic immigrants. Compared to their dominating presence in the AFL, for example, Irish radicals—although they included such fiery organizers as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, William Z. Foster and James Cannon—were only a beleaguered handful. Of the several million Poles concentrated in the industrial heartland, perhaps two or three thousand at most were affiliated to the right-wing Polish Socialist Federation. Meanwhile *Il Proletario* moaned that 'in a city that numbers 650,000 Italians [New York] there are a couple of hundred socialists

⁶¹ Charles Leinenweber, 'The American Socialist Party and the "New Immigrants"', *Science and Society*, Winter 1968, p. 25.

registered with the party'.⁶² While some historians have simply claimed that the opposition of the Catholic Church precluded any mass radicalization of Irish, Polish, or Italian labourers, the reasons would seem more complex. Italian immigrants to Argentina, after all, were the builders of a very radical labour movement, while Polish immigrant miners in the Ruhr were quite accessible to revolutionary agitation. Perhaps that temporary sojourner in American socialism, James Connolly, was right when he argued against Daniel De Leon that anti-clerical, anti-papist propaganda in an American context would always be mistaken by Catholic immigrants as another species of nativism. Connolly may have had particularly in mind the *Appeal to Reason*, the spectacularly successful (750,000 subscribers) socialist journal from the cornbelt, which declaimed virulently against both the Catholic church and the new immigration. Another kind of argument has been made by Melvyn Dubofsky in his study of the failure of the Socialist Party to reach the New York Irish: he points out that the Irish immigrant link to the Democratic machine, well established by the end of the nineteenth century, was at floodtide in the Progressive era when Boss Charles Murphy grafted modern social reforms onto the old wardheeling Tammany structure'.⁶³ The implication is that the Irish workers by virtue of their relatively privileged access to trade union organization and political patronage, were little tempted by the entreaties of a predominantly Jewish socialist movement which, if it ever came to power, might dismantle the traditional Hibernian job trust at city hall.

The Struggle for Industrial Unionism

One of the minor tragedies of the Socialist Party was that its bitter factional battles contributed so little to the recognition or clarification of these underlying strategic contradictions. Debs, almost alone at times, seemed to have a strong intuitive grasp of the fact that socialism could never hope to win the American working class politically unless the internal unity of the class could be grounded in some common direction of struggle. He hoped that the movement for industrial unionism could provide such a unifying practice—answering the needs of both craftsmen and operatives—and, for that reason, he came to reject the dual unionism espoused by the syndicalist left wing. In this spirit he issued a somewhat quixotic call in 1914 for the formation of an industrial union 'centre' based on an alliance of the Eastern (UAW) and Western (WFM) miners, which could lead organizational campaigns in the mass-production industries and establish an alternative pole to Gompersism.⁶⁴ Although Deb's Appeal was ignored, its spirit was resurrected in 1917 when the Chicago Federation of Labor under the militant leadership of John Fitzpatrick and Edward Nockels decided to flaunt narrow craft shibboleths and to pool resources for a bold organizing drive in the

⁶² *Il Proletario*, quoted in S.M. Toman and M.H. Engel (eds.), *The Italian Experience in the United States*, Staten Island 1970, p. 192.

⁶³ Melvyn Dubofsky, 'Success and Failure of Socialism in New York City, 1900-1918: A Case Study', *Labor History*, Fall 1968, p. 372.

⁶⁴ Daniel De Leon, of course, was the premier theorist of 'revolutionary industrial unionism', except that in his fervid sectarian conception this entailed winning the working class to the Socialist Labor Party's tiny 'socialist unions' rather than work within existing unions.

stockyards. With William Z. Foster as chief organizer and abetted by the government's fear of wartime strikes, 100,000 packinghouse workers in Chicago and neighbouring cities were unionized in a historic victory over the big packers in 1918.

1919: the Test of Steel

The next year, with the faint-hearted and unreliable support of the AFL leadership, Foster and Fitzpatrick attempted to carry the methods of the stockyard campaign to the steel valleys of Pennsylvania and the mill neighbourhoods of South Chicago. The steel industry was the Maginot Line of the open shop in America, and it was universally recognized that its organization was the strategic key to the entire industrial working class. Although the House of Morgan had wiped out the last vestiges of craft unionism a decade before, Foster and Fitzpatrick found hope in the growing unrest of the immigrant steel-workers who laboured seven days a week, twelve hours a day in the deadly mills for poverty wages. Despite the vacillating attitude of the skilled native workers and the complex problems of craft territoriality (no less than 24 AFL unions claimed jurisdictions in steel), several hundred thousand, primarily immigrant, steel-workers heeded Foster's strike call against the most powerful industrial monopoly in the world. The Slavs and Italians held firm for three months against the 'cossack terror' of the state police and company guards, but in the end the strike was betrayed by the craft unions and undermined by the growing climate of anti-radical, anti-foreign hysteria in the country.

As one historian has put it, 1919 was the 'turning point . . . which didn't turn'.⁶⁵ It was the failed test of native labour's ability to unite with the immigrant proletariat. The defeat of the steel-workers' organizing drive marked the end of the remarkable insurgency of Eastern and Southern European workers which had rocked industry since 1909. Faced with a tidal wave of nativist reaction, exemplified by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in midwestern industrial states, the 'new' immigrants retreated into the sanctuaries of ethnic community until the Depression triggered a second, even more militant upsurge. As for the skilled workers, the 1919 defeat opened the way for a broad employers' offensive that rolled back the wartime gains of the AFL and established the open-shop 'American Plan' upon the ruins of the once mighty mineworkers and railway shop unions.

The Last Act

In this period of general retreat, however, a last great outburst of popular radicalism flared across the Northwestern tier of states from Illinois to Washington. The Farmer Labor Party movement of 1919-24 drew energy from a number of centres of resistance, including the militant city labour federations in Chicago, Seattle, and Minneapolis, embattled coalminers in Southern Illinois, immigrant iron-miners in Minnesota, and the semi-socialist Non-Partisan Leagues in the Dakotas.

⁶⁵ David Brody, *Labor in Crisis—The Steel Strikes of 1919*, Philadelphia and New York 1965, cover note.

Attempting to fill the vacuum left by the factional disintegration of the Socialist Party in 1919, the third-party movement aimed to unify a fightback against the bosses' offensive, government repression, falling crop prices, and the coal depression. After a number of false starts and premature initiatives, the powerful Farmer Labor Party of Minnesota, already in control of its state's government, assumed leadership of the movement to regroup the various popular blocs into a new national party. Although the movement had to blend a diversity of ideologies ranging from Republican progressivism to bolshevism, it made great strides in mobilizing labour support in neighbouring states. At this point, on the very eve of the founding convention, Gompers (in a repeat performance of his earlier sabotage of Labour-Populism) and the railway brotherhoods intervened to wreck the embryonic new party. Red-baiting the Minnesota movement for allowing Communist participation, they convinced the venerable progressive statesman, Robert LaFollete, to refuse nomination and a third party ticket, and thereby scuttled the electoral strategy which farmer-labourites had hoped would unite the new party. Although LaFollette ran on an independent ticket endorsed by the AFL in the 1924 presidential elections, the actual labour support was desultory and paved the way for the AFL's return to its old non-partisan bunker.

It would be hard to exaggerate the magnitude of American labour's defeat in the 1919-1924 period. For almost a decade the corporations were virtually free from the challenge of militant unionism. In the interlude of the 'American Plan' employers accelerated the attack on worker 'control' within the labour process, the new mass-production technologies advancing side by side with new forms of corporate management and work supervision. The totality of this transformation of the labour process—first 'Taylorism', then 'Fordism'—conferred vastly expanded powers of domination through its systematic decomposition of skills and serialization of the workforce.⁶⁶ Already by the end of the First World War, the capitalist class in United States (especially in the advanced sectors of the 'Second Technological Revolution': vehicles, electrical machinery, chemicals, and other consumer durables) was perhaps a generation ahead of its European competitors in the degree to which skilled labour had been subordinated and fragmented in the labour process. At the same time, however, the revolution in production and the post-war debacle of the AFL was weakening the material props of craft consciousness. The 'Fordist' integration of mass production was setting the stage for the emergence of the CIO and a rebirth of industrial unionism.

⁶⁶ The productivity revolution represented by the new labour processes resulted in an almost 50% increase in industrial production between 1918 and 1928 while the factory workforce actually declined by 6%. Thus, as Stan Vittoz, has pointed out, "the traditional dependence by American industry on a continual influx of low-cost immigrant labor never returned after the war," and big business raised only half-hearted opposition to the successful nativist campaign for immigration restriction in the early 1920s. Vittoz, 'World War I and the Political Accommodation of Transitional Market Forces: The Case of Immigration Restriction', *Politics and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1978, p. 65.

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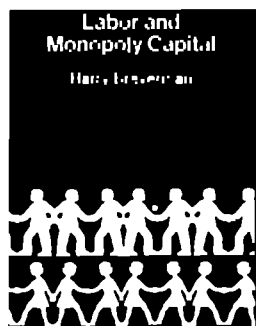
The Transformation of U.S. Industry, 1860-1920

Dan Clawson

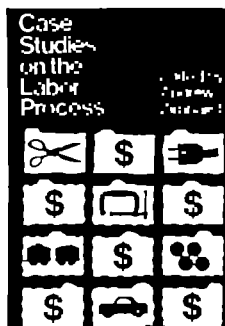
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Rationality and Class Struggle

It is commonplace for writers on Marx, whether Marxists of various tendencies or critics of varying degrees of sympathy for Marxism, to hold that among Marx's major theoretical achievements was the inauguration of a new 'theory' of history, designated 'historical materialism'. While aspects of this theory were intimated throughout Marx's writings, only rarely did it get explicit and sustained discussion, most notably in the celebrated *Preface* (1859) to *The Critique of Political Economy*. Nonetheless, for all its acknowledged importance, historical materialism has fared poorly in the Marxist literature. The schematic assertions of the 1859 *Preface*, while hardly transparent, seem disarmingly simple, lending themselves to easy adoption in the 'orthodox' Marxisms of the Second and Third Internationals. In consequence, what is hardly more than a sketch of a theory has been effectively frozen into dogma, immune from the often facile but sometimes trenchant criticisms levelled against it, and impervious to theoretical elaboration or even clarification. It is only with the disintegration of orthodoxy that the pressing need for an *account* of historical materialism, and a sustained

defence or criticism of it, has come to be recognized. Despite the virtual absence of direct discussion, it is clear that the cutting edge of twentieth century Western Marxism, as it has developed in more or less overt opposition to the official Marxisms of the Communist Parties, has tended to oppose the historical materialism of the *Preface*: though, to be sure, Western Marxists have seldom, if ever, acknowledged doing so; and sometimes even outdo those they write against in professing allegiance to 'historical materialism'. The reasons for opposing the classical formulation of historical materialism are nonetheless readily apparent.

Questioning the Primacy of Productive Forces

There is, first of all, a rigidly determinist cast to the historical materialism of the *Preface* that accords poorly with the general tendency of Western Marxist thought. There are also political grounds for opposition. Indisputably, the *Preface* accords causal primacy (of a sort it does not clearly explain) to what Marx calls 'productive forces' (*Produktivkräfte*) over 'relations of production' (*Produktionsverhältnisse*); thus suggesting precisely the kind of 'evolutionary' or 'economist' political posture Western Marxists have opposed with virtual unanimity. If it is indeed the case, as Marx contends in the *Preface*, that 'no social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed,' and if 'new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself,' then it would seem that socialist transformation depends less on revolutionizing production relations directly, as Western Marxists tend to maintain, than on the development of productive forces.¹

This conclusion has indeed been drawn by the Communist Parties, as by many others; and has inspired a political programme in the Soviet Union and elsewhere from which virtually all Western Marxists outside the Communist Parties, and many within, in varying degrees dissent. The litany of Soviet sins, committed for the sake of developing productive forces, is all too well known: the brutal collectivization of agricultural production, the hierarchical structure and 'productivist' ideology that governs the factories, the selective and technocratic

¹ A more straightforward reading of Marx's injunctions would suggest the folly of attempting to build socialism anywhere but in the most advanced capitalist centres, a position universally adhered to by the Marxists of the Second International, including the Bolsheviks, who in overthrowing bourgeois rule in Europe's most backward capitalist country, sought to spark world revolution by attacking imperialism at its 'weakest link'. Bolshevik success in maintaining political power in the USSR and the failure of the Revolution elsewhere in Europe, complicated efforts to develop a politics (and a political theory) based on this position. Read sympathetically, Stalin's notion of 'socialism in one country', though plainly contrary to what all Marxists before the October Revolution believed, is an attempt to develop such a politics. So too is the Trotskyist theory of Permanent Revolution. This is not the place to compare these positions, nor to assess their success in translating the classical Marxian account of the primacy of productive forces into a politics appropriate for the world situation that developed after the October Revolution. The point is just that, for both Trotsky and Stalin, what is crucially important in socialist transformation, and what must therefore have primacy in any socialist politics, is the society's productive forces and their development.

structure of education, the severe centralization of political power, the indefinite prolongation of police terror and the progressive (and apparently intractable) growth of bureaucratic despotism. Needless to say, commitment to the theoretical positions of the 1859 *Preface* does not entail the political programmes adopted by the leaders of the Soviet Union; and it is likely that even under the conditions the Soviet Union and other Communist states face, and without slackening the development of productive forces, a more 'human face' is an historic possibility. In any case, the best Marxist thought in the West has sought to distance itself from the Soviet experience; and so, sometimes inadvertently, sometimes deliberately, from the theoretical positions that Soviet politics seems to presuppose.

The Cultural Revolution in China (or, at least, Western perceptions of it), in proclaiming 'politics in command', in apparently aiming at the revolutionary transformation of relations of production, while neglecting or even disparaging the development of productive forces, provided, at last, a model of an official Marxism at odds with the 1859 *Preface*. It is not surprising, then, that the tendency in Western Marxist thought most solidly (implicitly) with the Cultural Revolution, and also most intent upon developing Marx's contributions to a theory of history—the tendency developed by Louis Althusser, Etienne Balibar and their co-thinkers—should break expressly with the evolutionary account of historical materialism dominant in the Second and Third Internationals. Even if they did not quite repudiate the 1859 *Preface*, they so qualified their acceptance of it, that they might as well have struck the text from the Marxist canon.² Like so many other major Western Marxists, Althusser and Balibar look with ill-disguised embarrassment on the simple declarations of the 1859 *Preface*, and thus on historical materialism as traditionally understood. To be sure, Althusserians remain adamant defenders of what they call 'historical materialism'. But their 'historical materialism' has little to do with what the term has traditionally meant to generations of Marxists. They retain the term at the cost of altering its meaning. 'Historical materialism', for Althusser and Balibar, has come to be synonymous with 'Marxist social science' (or, as they would prefer, with the Marxist 'science of history'). Thus it is distinguished, in their view, from rival accounts of history and society by its methodological positions (its view of causality and explanation, its concept of 'contradiction', its logic of concept formation and theory construction) and not at all by its substantive theoretical claims about the primacy of productive forces. And what the Althusserians do more or less explicitly, other Western Marxist tendencies do too, though often even less self-consciously and perspicaciously. Thus historical materialism, in the sense of the 1859 *Preface*, has effectively been abandoned in the most lively and penetrating Marxist currents.

However, the resurgence of interest in Marxist theory in the English-speaking world, particularly among philosophers trained in the analytic tradition, has kindled a new and generally sympathetic interest in the

² Cf., for example, Etienne Balibar, 'The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism', in L. Althusser, and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital*, NLB London 1970, esp. pp. 202–208.

positions of the 1859 *Preface*. This emerging tendency, at odds both with earlier orthodoxies and also with the main currents of Western Marxism, has been given major theoretical expression in a new book by G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*.³

Without in the least slackening the critical political stance characteristic of the best of Western Marxism, Cohen boldly and remarkably takes exception to the widespread abandonment of the theses of the 1859 *Preface*. In arguing the case for the primacy of productive forces, Cohen mounts what is likely the most substantial defence of historical materialism (in the traditional sense) ever launched; while throwing down a challenge to the best Marxist thought of the past decades. Cohen sets out unabashedly to reconstruct and defend the 'technological determinism'⁴ Western Marxists have, virtually without exception, inveighed against; and thus to rehabilitate—not as dogma, but as defensible theory—the positions of the 1859 *Preface*.

Western Marxism's stance on the kind of position Cohen defends was originally a reaction (in large measure) to the dogmatism of the official Marxisms of the Second and Third Internationals. Gradually, this stance has itself become, if not quite a new dogma, at least an automatic response. Views that accord primacy to productive forces over production relations (and, in turn, over the legal and political 'superstructure') are everywhere faulted as crude and 'vulgar'; as leading to a 'mechanistic' politics that denies the effective historical role of individual and class agency, and even the theoretical and practical importance of class struggle. Cohen shows, beyond any question, that this kind of response to the traditional view is woefully facile and inadequate. The traditional view, whatever our final assessment of it, is eminently serious and, as Cohen would have it, defensible. Moreover, it is very likely Marx's own position, as Cohen convincingly argues. However, we are not convinced that the position Cohen defends, at least as it presently stands, is at all adequate. The consensus against technological determinism, even if not nearly so obvious as it formerly appeared, is still, we think, basically sound.

Cohen's central contention, designated the Primacy Thesis, holds that social relations of production are explained by the level of development of productive forces. We will examine the case for the Primacy Thesis as such, and also for a number of more fundamental claims Cohen advances with a view to defending it. Our thesis, in short, is that Cohen's account neglects what is crucial for any adequate account of revolutionary social transformations: the question of class capacities. Thus the theory of history Cohen defends is, at best, partial and one-sided; and in consequence, defective both theoretically and politically.

³ G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Oxford University Press, 1978. Other recent work, elaborating similar positions, include: John McMurtry, *The Structure of Marx's World View*, Princeton 1978; and William Shaw, *Marx's Theory of History*, Stanford 1978.

⁴ Not 'economic determinism', as is often supposed. On Cohen's account, the productive forces that are accorded primacy are not, strictly speaking, part of the economy!

But even if we do not finally agree with Cohen, the challenge his work poses is extremely welcome. Too often, discussions of historical materialism, as of much else of pertinence to Marxist thought, when not entirely insensitive to the requirements of rational reconstruction and defence, lapse into that dreadful obscurantism that, for all its positive achievements, plagues Western Marxism. Cohen has given us a standard of clarity to which subsequent discussions of Marx's theory of history, as well as of other aspects of Marxist theory, must aspire. It is not the least virtue of this book that its theses and arguments are sufficiently clear and rigorous that they can be constructively criticized.

The Case for the Primacy Thesis

The Primacy Thesis, again, maintains that: 'the nature of a set of production relations is explained by the level of development of the productive forces embraced by it (to a far greater extent than vice versa).'⁵ (p. 134) The burden of *Karl Marx's Theory of History* is to defend this position. It is the Primacy Thesis, on Cohen's account, that distinguishes Marx's theory of history.

Productive forces are said to explain relations of production *functionally*.⁶ A given set of relations of production is determined by the functional requirements necessary for the expansion of productive forces. Specifically, '... the production relations are of a kind R at time t because relations of kind R are suitable to the use and development of the productive forces at t, given the level of development of the latter at t.' (p. 160) And again: 'when relations endure stably, they do so because they promote the development of the forces. ... The property of a set of productive forces which explains the nature of the economic structure embracing them is their disposition to develop within a structure of that nature.' (p. 161)

Cohen's task is to give an account of the structure of interconnections between forces and relations of production which make functional explanations of this sort defensible. In this section, we outline the salient features of Cohen's argument (omitting virtually all of the fine and intricate detail). This reconstruction (and simplification) of Cohen's position then forms the basis for the critical remarks that follow in the next section.

The overall argument can be decomposed into five relatively independent theses: A given level of development of productive forces is

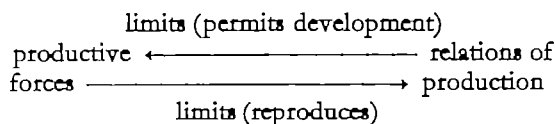
⁵ In chapters 1 and 2 Cohen provides a very lucid and useful gloss on these key notions of historical materialism. Very roughly, 'productive forces' (*Produktivkräfte*) designates the technical organization of the labour process; while 'relations of production' (*Produktionsverhältnisse*) designates forms of real social ownership and control.

⁶ In brief, functional explanations explain the existence or form of phenomena by virtue of their effects. A classic example is Malinowski's explanation of the existence of magic rituals among Trobriand Islanders as functional for the reduction of fear and anxiety elicited by dangerous forms of fishing. On functional explanation in social science, see Arthur Atinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories*, New York 1968, and also Cohen's own, very important discussion in Chapters 9 and 10 of *Karl Marx's Theory of History*.

compatible with only a limited range of relations of production (Thesis 1). Since the forces of production tend to develop over time (Thesis 2), these forces eventually reach a level at which they are no longer compatible with existing relations of production (Thesis 3). When this occurs, the relations are said to 'fetter' the productive forces. Because rational human beings will not in the long run tolerate the fettering of productive forces, they will transform these relations of production (Thesis 4), and substitute new relations that are optimal for the further development of productive forces (Thesis 5). We shall consider each of these theses in turn.

(1) *The Compatibility Thesis: A given level of development of productive forces is compatible with only a limited range of relations of production.* This thesis is plainly essential for the Primacy Thesis. If a given level of development of productive forces were compatible with any relations of production whatsoever, then the forces could hardly *explain* the relations. Cohen, however, offers no general defence of this claim. Instead, he supports it by citing examples. Thus: 'Slavery . . . could not be the general condition of producers in a society of computer technology, if only because the degree of culture needed in labourers who can work that technology would lead them to revolt, successfully, against slave status. (p. 158)

As his examples make clear, 'compatibility' has a precise sense: forces and relations of production are compatible whenever the relations allow for the further development (or, as Cohen adds in Chapter 11, the effective deployment) of productive forces; and where these productive forces help to strengthen and reproduce existing relations of production. Compatibility thus designates a system or reciprocal effects, as the following diagram illustrates:



Productive forces impose limits on the range of possible relations of production (since only certain relations will be reproduced by these forces), and relations of production impose limits on productive forces (since only certain productive forces can be properly utilized and developed within those relations).

Cohen uses the Compatibility Thesis to develop a general typology of correspondences between forms of production relations (economic structures) and levels of development of productive forces. This typology is summarized in the following table (cf. p. 198):

| <i>Form of Economic Structure</i> | | <i>Level of Productive Development</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 1. Pre-class society | } Corresponding to | No surplus |
| 2. Pre-capitalist class society | | Some surplus, but less than |
| 3. Capitalist society | | Moderately high surplus, but less than |
| 4. Post-class society | | Massive surplus |

This table of correspondences is admittedly roughly drawn: it fails to distinguish at all among the various forms of pre-capitalist class societies, and it provides no criteria for distinguishing the different levels of productive development. Nonetheless, it does indicate the general contours of Cohen's position.

The rationale for these correspondences is plain enough. Class relations are impossible without some surplus, since a class (for Marx) is, by definition, determined by its relation to other classes in the social process of appropriating an economic surplus. Pre-class society (primitive communism) is therefore incompatible with any level of development of productive forces capable of generating a small surplus. And a small surplus, in turn, is incompatible with capitalist class relations. Capitalism requires a moderately high surplus (and thus a moderately developed level of the forces of production), in order to allow for 'repeated introduction of new productive forces and thus for regular capitalist investments.' (p. 198) When a moderately high level of surplus is reached, pre-capitalist relations of production increasingly fetter the further development of productive forces, and therefore come to be superseded by distinctly capitalist social relations. Likewise a moderately high level of development of productive forces is incompatible with what Cohen calls post-class society, a society of collective control of the surplus by the direct producers. Since the development of productive forces from moderate to high levels requires great deprivation and toil, the direct producers would never freely impose such sacrifices on themselves. Only a production system dominated by market imperatives, forcing a logic of accumulation on both direct producers and owners of means of production can accomplish this development.

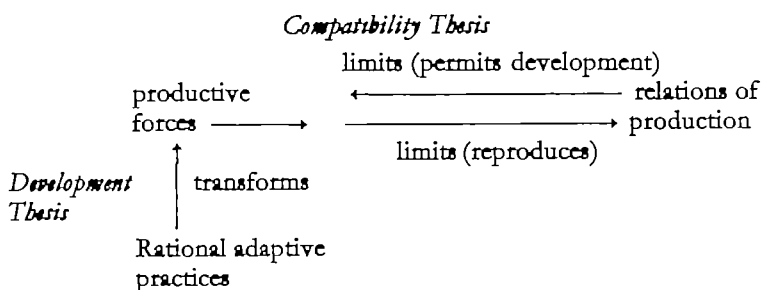
The Compatibility Thesis thus maintains, albeit roughly, a systematic relation of correspondance between forces and relations of production. But it does not itself establish the primacy of productive forces. As Cohen writes: '... some Marxists who accept the primacy of the forces are content to equate it with the constraints they impose on the production relations. But that is unsatisfactory. For the constraint is symmetrical. If high technology rules out slavery, then slavery rules out high technology. Something must be added to mutual constraint to establish the primacy of the forces.' (p. 158) That 'something' is the Development Thesis.

(2) *The Development Thesis: The productive forces tend to develop throughout history.* This tendency, Cohen argues, is based on specific characteristics of human nature, the human condition and human capacities. Human beings are at least somewhat rational, and 'rational beings who know how to satisfy compelling wants . . . will be disposed to seize and employ the means to satisfaction of those wants.' (p. 152) Under conditions of (relative) scarcity, where few if any wants are satisfied immediately and without effort, the development of productive forces becomes a 'compelling want' on the part of rational agents. Then, inasmuch as human beings 'possess intelligence of a kind and degree which enables them to improve their situation' (152), they will in fact seize the means for satisfaction of their wants by continuously and progressively developing productive forces (assuming, of course, that

no countervailing tendencies of sufficient strength intervene). Thus human beings are moved by a permanent impulse to try to improve their abilities to transform nature to satisfy their wants. In consequence, Cohen concludes, there is a tendency for productive forces to develop over time. Further, these improvements will generally be cumulative. Inasmuch as human beings are rational, having once improved their situation by developing the productive forces they find at hand, they will not revert to less developed forces, except under extraordinary circumstances beyond their control.

The Development Thesis introduces the asymmetry lacking in the Compatibility Thesis. These two theses together imply a further thesis, not formulated as such by Cohen, but a plank of his argument nonetheless. We call this third claim: the Contradiction Thesis.

(3) *The Contradiction Thesis.* Given the reciprocal constraints that exist between forces and relations of production (the Compatibility Thesis), and the tendency of the productive forces to develop (the Development Thesis), with sufficient time, the productive forces will develop to a point where they are no longer compatible (i.e. contradict) the relations of production under which they had previously developed. Thus while, at any given time, forces and relations of production are mutually determining (each imposing limits on the other), their relation becomes asymmetrical over time in virtue of those rational adaptive practices that progressively augment the level of development of productive forces. To return to our diagram:



The Contradiction Thesis, then, asserts the inevitability of 'contradictions' (intensifying incompatibilities) between forces and relations of production. The relations come to 'fetter' the development of the forces. This contradiction might in principle be resolved by an adaptation downward of the productive forces, by a regression sufficient to restore compatibility. But this kind of resolution is ruled out by the Development Thesis. Thus the contradictions that inevitably occur can be resolved only through a transformation of the relations of production. Or, in other words:

(4) *The Transformation Thesis:* When forces and relations of production are incompatible (as they will always eventually become, so long as class society persists), the relations will change in such a way that compatibility between forces and relations of production will be restored. Where contradictions between forces and relations of production emerge, as they inevitably

will in class society, the resolution will always be in favour of the forces, not the relations; it is the relations of production that give. As Marx wrote, '... in order that they may be deprived of the results attained (by the development of productive forces) and forfeit the fruits of civilization, they are obliged from the moment when their mode of intercourse no longer corresponds to the productive forces acquired, to change all their traditional social forms.'⁷

'Why,' Cohen asks, 'should the fact that the relations restrict the forces foretell their doom, if not because it is irrational to persist with them given the price in lost opportunity to further inroads against scarcity?' (p. 159) Thus Thesis 4 follows from Theses 2 and 3 (which follows, in turn, from Theses 1 and 2).

The Transformation Thesis 'fortells the doom' of relations of production which fetter productive forces, but by itself it does not fortell what new relations will replace the old, beyond specifying that, whatever these relations are, they will be compatible with the level of development of productive forces. However, for forces to explain relations in the sense the Primacy Thesis requires (to explain actual relations of production), it is crucial that we be able to specify the outcome of those transformations that, if Thesis 4 is right, we know to be necessary. This is the point of the Optimality Thesis.

(5) *The Optimality Thesis. When a given set of relations of production becomes fetters on the further development of productive forces and are thus transformed, they will be replaced by relations of production which are functionally optimal for the further development of the productive forces.* In Cohen's words, 'the relations which obtain at a given time are the relations most suitable for the forces to develop at that time, given the level they have reached by that time'. (p. 171) The rationale for this claim apparently derives, again, from the Development Thesis, now in conjunction with the Transformation Thesis. If fettering relations of production are abandoned because they conflict with a rational desire for development, it would be irrational to replace them with anything short of those relations of production that, in the circumstances, are optimal for the further development of productive forces. Thus Thesis 5 follows, on Cohen's account, from Theses 2 and 4.

Moreover, Thesis 5 is necessary for the full defence of the Primacy Thesis. If for a particular level of development of productive forces, more than one set of relations of production would in fact stimulate further development, and if the productive forces did not, so to speak, 'select' the optimal relations from among the set of possible relations, the character of actual relations of production would not be explained (functionally) by the productive forces. In other words, without the Optimality Thesis, the force of the Primacy Thesis would be severely and perhaps fatally, mitigated. It is, we think, because this claim is so crucial for the Primacy Thesis that Cohen insists on it vehemently, even in the face of obvious counter-examples. Pre-capitalist class relations, for the most part, can hardly be said to have encouraged the development of productive forces. Nonetheless, Cohen argues, they

⁷ Marx to Annenkov, 23 Dec. 1846, cited in Cohen, p. 159.

were optimal for their time. 'Even a set of relations which is not the means whereby the forces within it develop,' Cohen insists, 'may be optimal for the development of the forces during the period when it obtains'. (p. 171)

Since the Optimality Thesis depends on the Transformation Thesis, if the latter is fatally flawed, then so too is the former. We will argue in what follows that this is indeed the case; and we will thus not discuss the Optimality Thesis directly in our assessment and critique of the Primacy Thesis as a whole.⁸

In any case, with Thesis 5, the case for the Primacy Thesis is now complete. Our reconstruction of Cohen's argument has, of course, left out much of what is most valuable in Cohen's discussion: the subtlety of his argumentation and the many insights and clarifications he provides *en passant*. But the broad outline of his central contention is now sufficiently clear. The productive forces functionally explain the relations of production in that the effects of the relations on the tendentially developing forces determine what the relations of production are, and whether they will continue to exist or be transformed.

In the section that follows, we question the Primacy Thesis as such, and the sort of rationale Cohen provides for its defence. Then in the next section we focus directly on the specific theses Cohen uses to argue for the Primacy Thesis.

Rationality and Class Capacity

Although Marx spoke disparagingly of the contractarian tradition in social and political theory, the theory of history advanced in the 1859 *Preface* is itself derived in contractarian fashion. Of course Marx would have resisted this characterization and perhaps so too would

⁸ While we will not criticise the Optimality Thesis in a systematic way, it is worth noting some of its theoretical and political implications. In particular, the Optimality Thesis is an important element in the argument that capitalism is the necessary form of social relations of production for the rapid development of industrial forces of production. Cohen goes to great length to defend this proposition, arguing that only under the compulsion of the market and the domination of use value by exchange value can sufficient sacrifices be imposed on the direct producers to allow for the rapid development of industrial forces of production. Capitalism is thus the optimal structure for such development. This argument, which recapitulates the shared wisdom of Marxists prior to the October Revolution, is plainly directed against those who hold that socialism too can rapidly and systematically develop the productive forces. Cohen insists that a high level of development of productive forces (and thus a massive surplus) is a necessary condition for socialism, rather than a task to be achieved under socialism; and that without a massive surplus already in place, attempts at constructing socialism will fail. 'Premature attempts at revolution,' Cohen argues, 'whatever their immediate outcome, will eventuate in a restoration of capitalist society'. (p. 206) The possibility of class relations in which production is not directed towards the accumulation of exchange value, but where systematic imperatives for the development of means of production nonetheless exist—not as 'capital' (accumulated exchange value), but as expanded capacities for the production of use values—is never directly confronted. Cohen's analysis is thus silent on the various arguments concerning post-capitalist class societies as developed by such theorists as Rudolph Bahro in *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, NLB 1978, G. Konrad and I. Szeleyni in *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, London and New York 1979, and others.

Cohen; but Cohen's reconstruction of the argument for historical materialism, an argument Marx himself never provides directly, is contractarian nonetheless.

In its more familiar uses in political and social philosophy, contractarianism is a methodological programme for dealing with normative questions, for discovering the principles that determine how political and social institutions ought to be organized. The normative principles that ought to govern the state are those these individuals would choose. Contractarianism supposes, then, that individuals have a certain capacity for acting rationally in an instrumental sense; that they are able, to some extent at least, to adopt means to ends in order to realize their goals. And it supposes that their situation in a state of nature leads them, as Rousseau put it in *The Social Contract*, to seek 'to change their mode of existence'.

The same method lends itself to other speculative investigations, even where there is no question of determining normative principles. Thus as Marx pointed out in his methodological *Introduction* to the *Grundrisse*, the classical economists, with their 'isolated hunters and fishermen', were effectively contractarians: building an economic theory out of a logically prior notion of individual (instrumental) rationality in a milieu of (relative) scarcity. And so too, whether consciously or not, and despite all Marx has to say against contractarianism, is Marx himself. The classical formulation of historical materialism, though arguably corroborated by the 'facts' of concrete history, is defended, as Cohen demonstrates, by an extended thought-experiment in which the general contours of human history are derived, as in the classical economists, from a logical prior claim about individual (instrumental) rationality and about individuals' capacities to realize their ends in a milieu of (relative) scarcity. Individuals, in a word, have a stake in the development of productive forces in order to overcome that scarcity; and it is in virtue of this overwhelming interest that the course of human history proceeds.

The radical individualism Marx inveighs against in the classical economists is muted in Cohen's reconstruction, because individuals are located in classes and thus have interests not only in the overall development of productive forces, but also in the maintenance or overthrow of existing forms of class society.⁹ Still, in Cohen's view, class interests are reducible to individuals' interests; that is, to the interests of individuals situated differentially in a social structure. Thus even if the appeal is not to 'isolated hunters and fisherman', but to serfs and lords or workers and capitalists, it is still, in the final analysis, a reference to individuals.¹⁰

⁹ As Cohen argues in Chapter 2 of *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, the sorting of individuals into social classes is itself a necessary feature of the production process under conditions of (relative) scarcity.

¹⁰ We shall not speculate here whether Marx's own strictures against the individualism of the contractarian programme, against the very notion of a logically prior individual as the starting-point for social or political theory, can be turned against his own (implicit) case for the theses of the 1859 *Preface*; except to note that the introduction of classes and class interests within a still contractarian framework does not in any obvious way avoid the charge of incoherence Marx levels against

The issue, then, is whether or not Cohen, following the letter and spirit of the 1859 *Preface*, has in fact derived an adequate, substantive picture of the general contours of human history. We think he has not. Our view, in brief, is that one cannot develop an adequate account of human history just by reference to individuals' or even classes' interests. It is crucial in addition to determine how these interests are translated into social and political practices. Cohen effectively denies that, in the long run, the realization of human interests (in the development of productive forces) can be blocked by social constraints. These interests may be impeded, of course. Indeed, it is their impedence that structures the course of human history, making the transformation of economic structures necessary. But interests in the development of productive forces cannot, on Cohen's view, be finally blocked. Thus at the level of generality at which historical materialism (in the sense of the 1859 *Preface*) is posed, social constraints on the implementation of interests can be overlooked. On this crucial point, we think Cohen is wrong. The transformation of interests into practices is the central problem for any adequate theory of history, as it is for the theory and practice of politics. It is worth noting that this problem is a central motif of the thought of those Marxists who have, in effect, distanced themselves from the positions of the 1859 *Preface*. We agree with them that the theory of history Marx sketches in that text is inadequate to the extent it ignores or effectively minimizes the problem of *class capacities*.

We define class capacities as those organizational, ideological and material resources available to classes in class struggle. Cohen, of course, realizes that there is a distinction to be drawn between class capacities in class struggles and class interests in the outcomes of these struggles. But he treats the problem of capacity as entirely subordinate to the problem of interests. Indeed, he even argues that class interests by themselves somehow generate the capacities requisite for their realization, so long as these interests advance the level of development of productive forces. Thus in discussing the domination of a ruling class, Cohen writes: 'But how does the fact that production would prosper under a certain class ensure its dominion? Part of the answer is that there is a general stake in stable and thriving production, so that the class best placed to deliver it attracts allies from other strata of society. Prospective ruling classes are often able to raise support among the classes subjected to the ruling class they would displace. Contrariwise, classes unsuited to the task of governing society tend to lack the confidence political hegemony requires, and if they do seize power, they tend not to hold it for long.' (p. 292)

contractarians in the essay *On the Jewish Question* and elsewhere. And neither shall we dwell on the anomalous use Marx seems to make of the classical and 'vulgar' economists' notion of practical reason as purely instrumental, as pertaining just to the adoption of means to ends, and not to the character of the ends themselves. That Marx's account of individual and class interests, and his claims about revolutionary motivation, do suppose a view of practical reason as purely instrumental is noteworthy and perhaps damaging; and, in any case, renders his positions vulnerable to some unexpected criticisms. (See Allen Buchanan, 'Revolutionary Motivation and Rationality,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 1, Fall 1979.) Investigation of these and related issues is, we think, crucial for the critical assessment of Marx's theory of history.

On Cohen's view, apparently, class interests determine class capacities. For ascending and progressive ruling classes, class interests somehow breed the capacities for seizing and exercising domination. For historically retrograde classes, in virtue of their interests, the capacity for class rule is correspondingly undone.

Cohen is very likely right that Marx himself saw the growth of class capacities (at least for the ascendant working class under capitalism) as a consequence of the emergence of revolutionary and transformative interests. As capitalism becomes increasingly untenable as an economic system, capitalism's gravediggers, the proletariat, become, Marx thought, increasingly capable of transforming capitalist relations of production. This coordination of interests and capacities is achieved, on Marx's account, by the mutual determination of interests and capacities by the development of productive forces. However, many Marxists have come, with good reason, to question this account. Instead of seeing an inexorable growth in the capacity of the working class to struggle against the intensifying irrationality of capitalism, it has been argued that there are systematic processes at work in capitalist society that disorganize the working class, block its capacities and thwart its ability to destroy capitalist relations of production. These processes range from labour market segmentation and the operation of the effects of racial and ethnic divisions on occupational cleavages within the working class, to the effects of the bourgeois legal system and privatized consumerism in advertising. (We will examine these processes in more detail in our discussion of the Transformation Thesis below.) All of these processes contribute to reproducing the disorganization of the working class rather than the progressive enhancement of its class capacity.

Thus there is no automatic development of working class capacities in consequence of the development of productive forces under capitalism. There are, to be sure, as Marx showed, processes at work that encourage such development. But there are also, as just noted, processes that profoundly, perhaps even overwhelmingly, discourage it. There is no adequate general theory of the balance between these processes; and thus no substitute for what Lenin called 'the soul of Marxism': the concrete investigation of concrete situations.

Moreover, what holds for the emergence of working class capacities under capitalism, Cohen's most likely case, surely pertains in general. There is no necessary relation between the development of an interest in social change on the part of rational agents (situated differentially in a social structure) and an historical capacity for bringing such changes about. A sustained and powerful (rational) interest in the transformation of an economic structure is not a sufficient condition, even in the long run, for the revolutionary transformation of that structure. So far as class capacities, *pace* Cohen, do not derive from the development of productive forces, it is arbitrary, in the end, to ascribe to these productive forces the kind of 'primacy' Cohen alleges.

Collapsing the issue of capacities for action into the problem of determining the rational objectives of action is characteristic of the type of

contractarian argument Cohen, and perhaps also Marx, at least in the 1859 *Preface*, employ. By abstracting human beings from their social/historical conditions in order to develop an account of pure rational action, the analysis implicitly takes the position that the structural conditions for the translation of rationality into action are of theoretically secondary interest to the problem of characterizing rational action itself. However, for the concrete investigation of concrete situations, the most powerful determinants of human activity generally lie in the distinctively social determinations contractarians effectively minimize. Human beings may be generally rational in the sense described by Cohen and yet may be generally thwarted from fully acting on the basis of that rationality because of social constraints, relations of domination, organizational incapacities for collective struggle and so on. The abstracted, ahistorical account of rationality may provide an essential element in the philosophical critique of those constraints, but it does not provide a basis for explaining the real determinations and contradictions of those constraints. Cohen has undoubtedly focused on an important component of any adequate explanation; but it is far from clear that in doing so he has advanced our general understanding of the actual course of human history.

To corroborate this conclusion, we will now turn to a critique of Cohen's specific arguments for the primacy of the productive forces.

Criticisms of Cohen's Argument:

1. The Compatibility Thesis

The Compatibility Thesis involves two interconnected claims: (a) that for a given level of forces of production, there is a limited range of compatible relations of production; and (b) for a given form of relations of production, there is a limited range of compatible forces of production.

The first of these two claims seems hard to fault. It is easy to posit a type of relation of production which would be incompatible with any specified level of the forces of production, and the thesis is supported as long as such examples are forthcoming. The second claim, however, is somewhat less convincingly argued. This is particularly true for Cohen's analysis of capitalism, where it is never entirely clear why there is a ceiling to the development of the forces of production within capitalist relations of production.

Cohen's analysis of 'fettering' in capitalism explicitly rejects the conventional falling rate of profit/rising organic composition of capital argument for crisis of accumulation. In that traditional argument, capitalism fetters the development of the forces of production because the crises of accumulation ultimately undermine the capacity of capitalists to invest, since investments occur only in the pursuit of profits and only out of surplus value. The declining rate of profit, therefore, erodes the capacity of capitalism to generate further advances

of the forces of production. Cohen, however, explicitly distances himself from such arguments. Indeed, he insists that none of his arguments hinge on the labour theory of value (p. 116), and in this work he remains agnostic on the adequacy of the 'specifically labour-theoretical account of value'. (p. 116) In a later essay he moves one step further and argues for the incoherence of the labour theory of value, thus further removing his general analysis from traditional crisis arguments.¹¹

How then does Cohen defend the thesis of the fettering of the forces of production in advanced capitalism? His basic argument is that because capitalism is production for exchange rather than use, capitalist relations of production have a built-in bias for using progress in productive forces to expand output rather than to expand leisure time (where leisure is defined as release from burdensome toil). Cohen writes: 'As long as production remains subject to the capitalist principle, the output-increasing option will tend to be selected and implemented in one way or another. . . . Now the consequence of the increasing output which capitalism necessarily favours is increasing consumption. Hence the boundless pursuit of consumption goods is a result of a productive process oriented to exchange-values rather than consumption-values. It is the Rockefellers who ensure that the Smiths need to keep up with the Jones.' (p. 306)

This generates an incompatibility between the forces and relations of production, not because productive power as such ceases to develop, but because it ceases to be rationally deployed: 'The productive technology of capitalism begets an unparalleled opportunity for lifting the curse of Adam and liberating men from toil, but the production relations of capitalist economic organization prevent the opportunity from being seized. . . . It brings society to the threshold of abundance and locks the door. For the promise of abundance is not an endless flow of goods, but a sufficiency produced with a minimum of unpleasant exertion.' (pp. 306-307)

The Compatibility Thesis is thus equivalent to the claim that the relations of production become irrational with respect to a general notion of improving the human condition. In the past such improvement was achieved by increasing the level of development of the forces of production themselves; in advanced capitalism it is achieved by the rational deployment of the forces of production that already exist. 'Fettering', therefore, is ultimately a fettering of the possibility of rational action. For the Compatibility Thesis to rest on a sound foundation, therefore, it is crucial that Cohen's account of rational action is adequately developed. As we shall see, there are important limitations on this issue.

2. The Development Thesis

At first glance, there seems to be little to criticize in the view that productive forces tend to develop over time, given the rational

¹¹ See G. A. Cohen, 'The Labour Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 4 (summer 1979), pp. 338-360.

interests and capacities of human beings in conditions of scarcity. The problem, however, is that the Development Thesis presupposes a transhistorical meaning for 'rationality' and 'scarcity', and thus a transhistorical notion of human beings' interests that likely cannot be sustained. If the content of both rational action and scarcity, and hence of interests, are not given for all time, but are instead endogenous to the social system; if the meaning of these terms is in some important sense determined by the relations of production themselves, then the Development Thesis, however unobjectionable in its own right, would not serve the purpose for which Cohen puts it.

Consider the case of scarcity. How many calories per day are necessary for an adequate or abundant diet? Is physical effort always toil? How much effort or strain is necessary to generate a sufficient aversion to toil to act as a sustained incentive for improvement? Marx argued in effect that these questions have no transhistorical answers. Thus a hut by itself might be seen as adequate shelter, whereas next to a palace it is a hovel. But whether huts are built next to palaces or not is as much a function of the relations of production as the development of the productive forces.

This problem with the definition of scarcity becomes particularly salient in the discussion of the fettering of the forces of production in late capitalism, where as Cohen rightfully notes, scarcity is something imposed by capitalist production relations and ideology, rather than confronted by those relations. But the problem is not unique to capitalism. In feudal society it is not at all obvious that if the consumption of all the parasitic classes (priests, lords, etc.) were redistributed to the peasantry there would have been in any meaningful sense 'scarcity'. Furthermore, if leisure time is a measure of scarcity, then the number of holy days in medieval society—at times nearly as many as work days in the year—would indicate that medieval society was characterized by considerably greater surplus time (if not necessarily surplus product) than is contemporary capitalism.

Yet, there was undoubtedly an impulse for technical change in feudal Europe that needs to be explained. If it is not the result of a universal impulse for human beings to improve their condition by virtue of the kind of animal they are, what was the underlying dynamic of such change? We would argue that the answer to this question requires a shift of the terms of the discussion from universal criteria for scarcity and rationality to class-specific notions of scarcity and rationality.

In feudalism, in these terms, there was systematic scarcity for feudal lords engaged in military competition for command of territories. In order to effectively wage such warfare, they needed revenues, retainers, military equipment, etc. There was thus an incentive for feudal ruling classes to attempt to exact more surplus from peasants and to encourage the development of improved means of waging war. The imperative to improve agrarian means of production thus came not, as Cohen's account suggests, from a rational desire to augment productive capacity in the face of natural scarcity, but as an indirect effect of feudal relations of production.

This argument may not seem inconsistent with Cohen's, since his account of the Primary Thesis requires that the relations of production be compatible with the development of productive forces, either by permitting development or by actually encouraging it. But recall that the explanatory asymmetry Cohen accords to productive forces over relations of production depends upon an independent argument for the development of the productive forces, one that does not itself hinge on the form of the relations of production. This is why Cohen turns to transhistorical claims about rationality and scarcity. The Development Thesis cannot both follow from the Primary Thesis and, at the same time, be a presupposition of it.

The problem can be restated as follows: the rational peasant (and other subordinate direct producers) in feudal society would probably have preferred a society without feudal lords and military competition; a society where peasants could directly consume all of the surplus product. Indeed, given the very slow rate of development of productive forces under feudalism, most peasants would probably have preferred completely stagnant development of the productive forces without exploitation, to slowly developing productive forces with exploitation. From their point of view, in short, there was nothing 'rational' about the way in which feudalism allowed for the development of the productive forces. But peasants, as a subordinate class, separated from the means of repression, lacked the capacity to translate their rational interests into collective actions. Therefore, the rationality and scarcity of the ruling class was imposed on them by the relations of production. Thus, contrary to what Cohen maintains, relations of production condition the development of productive forces, not because they allow for the translation of universal rationality into historically specific 'moments', but in virtue of the imposition of class specific rationalities and forms of scarcity.

3. The Contradiction Thesis

If the critique of the Development Thesis just sketched is correct, it is possible to imagine a class society in which there is no systematic tendency towards a contradiction between forces and relations of production. Or, in other words, it is possible to imagine a society in which no mechanisms exist for translating an *incompatibility* between forces and relations of production into a *contradiction*.

The 'Asiatic Mode of Production', as discussed by Marx and others, is in fact an example of such a possible society. If Marx's account of the Asiatic mode of production is right—that is, if the concept is coherent and actually applies to the analysis of actual or even possible societies—the social form of the relations of production with the attendant form of the state generated a permanent stagnation of the development of the forces of production. There was thus, in Cohen's terms, a clear incompatibility between the further development of the forces of production and the existing relations of production.

But was there a contradiction between the forces and relations of production? A contradiction implies that a stable reproduction of the structure is impossible, that there are endogenously generated impera-

tives for change. And for there to be such imperatives, there must exist within the society a new potential ruling class that is capable of organizing the development of the productive forces under its rule and the destruction of the old ruling class. If incompatibility does not itself engender such a class, then, incompatibility simply becomes the basis for permanent stagnation.

In the case of classical China there was no class capable of being such a bearer of productive advance. Because of the centralization of state power, the lack of the political and economic independence of the towns, the absorption of merchants into the existing ruling class, etc.; there was no social basis for the emergence of a proto-capitalist class in the urban centres. And the peasantry, while it might have had an interest in eliminating the mandarin ruling class, was so fragmented and dispersed into organic peasant communities, that it was unable to act as a revolutionary force. The existing social structure, in other words, contained no potential alternatives to the existing ruling class. And it contained no dynamic which would have generated such a class. It was only with the external assault of Western Capitalism on that social structure that the power of the ruling class was structurally broken.

Incompatibility leads to contradiction only if there exist class actors capable of being bearers of a new society, a new social form that would liberate the development of the forces of production. Whether or not such a new ruling class exists or will be generated depends not upon a dynamic vested in the forces of production, but in the specific historical forms of the social relations of production.¹²

4. The Transformation Thesis

Even if we were to assume that the first three theses were correct, there would still be reasons to reject the Transformation Thesis, i.e. the thesis that when a contradiction exists between the forces and relations of production, that it is the relations of production which will change. This thesis is problematic even where there is a potential historical bearer of the new relations of production.

Our criticism of the transformation thesis rests on two interconnected issues: (1) the relationship between class interests in social change and class capacities for such change; and (2) the relationship between an interest in the *outcome* of change and *interests* in the process of change.

¹² It appears here that Cohen has taken the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe as the paradigm of social change and transition for human society in general. In feudalism it was in fact the case that within the old social order the future ruling class—the bourgeoisie—was able to grow. But this does not imply that it was the development of the productive forces as such which even in this case provides the critical explanation of emergence of the bourgeoisie within the fabric of European feudalism. As Anderson and others have argued, it was the peculiar combination of highly parcellized sovereignty, geopolitical location, and the existence of a particular pattern of town-country relations which set the stage for the emergence of this new class. All of these are characteristics of the social structure of European feudalism, not consequences of the productive forces as such.

Cohen presents two kinds of arguments for the thesis that class capacities grow simultaneously with an intensifying interest in social transformation. The first is an argument of class alliances: ruling classes whose rule blocks the development of productive forces will lose support and allies; while potential new ruling classes which offer the possibility of the liberation of forces of production will gain allies and support.

The second argument is linked to the analysis of economic crisis: 'In our view, Marx was not a breakdown theorist, but he did hold that once capitalism is fully formed, then each crisis it undergoes is worse than its predecessor. . . . Therefore, socialism grows more and more feasible as crises get worse and worse (but not because they get worse and worse). There is no economically legislated final breakdown, but what is *de facto* the last depression occurs when there is a downturn in the cycle *and* the forces are ready to accept a socialist structure *and* the proletariat is sufficiently class conscious and organized.' (pp. 203-204)

Let us examine this argument more closely. The claim that socialism becomes increasingly feasible as productive forces grow seems unproblematic enough, inasmuch as a high level of development of productive forces is, on Cohen's view, a precondition for socialism. The claim that crises become ever more intense, however, is simply asserted. In fact, as already noted, Cohen goes on to define the pivotal contradiction of capitalism in quite different terms: emphasizing its incapacity to deploy productive forces rationally, not its incapacity to develop productive forces at all. Elsewhere Cohen has explicitly attacked the theoretical foundation of Marxian crisis theory: the labour theory of value.¹³ Thus there appears to be no basis, on Cohen's account, for the claim that crisis tendencies intensify systematically. Finally, the claim that the proletariat is sufficiently class conscious and organized to support new relations of production is hardly established. Disillusionment with the bourgeoisie, even if it can be anticipated, is not equivalent to the revolutionary formation of the proletariat. Such disillusionment may be a necessary condition for the proper political organization of a revolutionary proletariat; but it is hardly sufficient.¹⁴

These arguments for the growth of working class capacities coincident with the development and fettering of the forces of production are doubly inadequate: first, because class capacities are determined by a variety of factors irreducible to the development of the forces of production as such; and second, because in certain circumstances technological change itself may systematically undermine, rather than augment, the capacities for struggle of the working class.

¹³ Cf. 'The Labour Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation'.

¹⁴ Thus Cohen's rejection of traditional crisis theory is of great consequence for his account. Were it the case that crisis tendencies inexorably lead to permanent stagnation, it could be argued that the maladies of capitalism would eventually constitute a sufficient cause for the formation of the working class as a revolutionary class. Given enough time, with a horizon of deteriorating conditions facing the working class, revolutionary organization might well develop. But on Cohen's account of the particular contradictions of late capitalism, this development is much less likely.

The capacity of the working class to forge effective organizations for struggle depends upon a wide range of economic, political and ideological factors. At the economic level, for example, labour market segmentation, the development of complex job hierarchies and internal labour markets, etc., undermine the unity of the working class at least in terms of immediate, market-related issues. This economic fragmentation of the working class is further intensified when it coincides with racial, ethnic or national divisions. Thus, while the tendencies towards the homogenization and degradation of labour forecast by Marx may contribute to the growth of working class capacities, these counter-tendencies of differentiation and segmentation undermine those capacities.

The political institutions of capitalist society also contribute systematically to the erosion of working class capacities. Poulantzas has argued in general terms that one of the essential effects of the 'relative autonomy' of the capitalist state is the disorganization of subordinate classes.¹⁵ Przeworski has taken this argument much further in demonstrating precisely how the parliamentary forms of the capitalist state systematically undermine the class character of working class political parties and deflect their programmes from revolutionary towards reformist objectives.¹⁶

Furthermore, the very proposition that the development of the forces of production tends to increase the capacity of the working class is suspect. While it is true, as Marx argued, that the development of the forces of production in capitalism improves communications among workers, brings workers together into ever larger factories, breaks down certain earlier forms of craft and skill divisions within the working class by degrading labour and so on, it is also true that many aspects of technical change have the effect of weakening the working class rather than strengthening it. The global telecommunications revolution, combined with dramatic improvements in transportation systems has made it much easier for the bourgeoisie to organize capitalist production globally, producing parts for consumer goods in 'world market factories' in the third world. This has meant that it is easier for the bourgeoisie to manipulate national and global divisions within the working class and to isolate technical-coordination from direct production. The development of repressive technology has made insurrectionary movements more difficult, particularly in the advanced capitalist world. These and other similar factors do not imply that technological change intrinsically weakens the working class, but they do suggest that there is no simple, monolithic relation between technical change and the growth in the class capacities of the working class.

Cohen has thus failed to demonstrate that class capacities of potentially revolutionary classes grow in step with the development and eventual fettering of the forces of production. This seriously undermines the

¹⁵ See especially *Political Power and Social Class*, NLB London 75.

¹⁶ See Adam Przeworski, 'Social Democracy as an Historical Phenomenon', *New Left Review*, 122.

cogency of the Primacy Thesis. For, if the preconditions for the emergence of the class capacities of the working class depend upon contradictions and dynamics located within the social relations of production and the superstructure, and cannot be derived from the development of the forces of production as such, then it is not the case that the existing relations of production are functionally explained by their tendency to promote the development of the productive forces. They may be just as fundamentally explained by their tendency to undermine the capacity of rival classes to become effective political forces.

Even if the problem of capacity for transformation is solved, the Transformation Thesis is still in doubt. Let us imagine that through a complex argument of mediations we are able to derive an account of the capacity of workers to transform society from the development (and fettering) of the productive forces. Workers still might not actually engage in such transformation because of the costs of the struggle for socialism.¹⁷ Rational actors do not act simply on the basis of the desirability of outcomes (however that is defined) but on the basis of the acceptability of the costs of the process needed to obtain that outcome. At one point, Cohen acknowledges this problem. In criticizing the view that the vote by workers for bourgeois parties demonstrates that they are captivated by bourgeois ideology, Cohen writes: 'This answer no doubt gives a part of the truth, in exaggerated form. But it is important to realize that it is not the whole truth. For it neglects the cost and difficulties of carrying through a socialist transformation. Workers are not so benighted as to be helpless dupes of bourgeois ideology, nor all so uninformed as to be unaware of the size of the socialist project. Marxist tradition expects revolution only in crisis, not because then alone will workers realize what burden capitalism puts upon them, but because when the crisis is bad enough the dangers of embarking on a socialist alternative become comparatively tolerable.' (p. 245)

The Transformation Thesis, then, is questionable because (a) even if the working class has a rational interest in transforming capitalism due to the fettering of the productive forces, it will not necessarily recognize capitalism as such as the cause of this fettering; because (b) even if workers in general come to understand that capitalist relations of production are the cause of stagnation, the working class may lack the organizational and political capacity to struggle effectively for a qualitative transformation of capitalism; and because (c) even if the working class has the political capacity to achieve a socialist revolution, the costs of such a revolutionary process may be intolerably high even under crisis conditions. This is *not* to say that a socialist transformation is impossible, but simply that the theory of socialist revolution cannot be derived from an account of the fettering of the productive forces.

Conclusion

To reject the Primacy Thesis is not to reject the importance of technological development in a theory of social change. Technological

¹⁷ Cf. Buchanan, 'Revolutionary Motivation and Rationality'.

development is surely a critical factor for opening up new historical possibilities; and a specification of the level and type of technological development undoubtedly helps in defining the range of possible alternatives to the existing social order. As Cohen and Marx contend, the fettering of the rational development and deployment of a society's productive capacity is crucially important for any explanation of revolutionary change.

What we would deny is the contention that explanatory primacy, in the sense Cohen explains, be accorded to the productive forces. At the very least, historical materialism, as Marx sketches it in the 1859 *Preface* and as Cohen reconstructs it, must be supplemented by a theory of class capacities. Such a theory, if the main lines of Western Marxism throughout the present century are sound, must be based directly on an analysis of the development of social relations of production, the state and ideology.

Socialist political strategies must contend directly with the obstacles in the way of developing appropriately revolutionary class capacities: the institutional form of the capitalist state, divisions within the working class, and between the working class and its (potential) allies, and mechanisms of ideological domination and deflection. Such obstacles are irreducible to the forces of production, and thus the fettering of those forces in no way ensures the eventual erosion of these obstacles to working class capacities.

Cohen's book thus lays down a political as well as a theoretical challenge. A revolutionary theory which sees the building of working class capacities as an inevitable outcome of technological development and which fails to understand the specificity of the role of social structural constraints in the formation of class capacities will, we think, be incapable of informing revolutionary practice constructively. The 'orthodoxy' Cohen has reconstructed and defended is, in our view, ultimately inadequate politically, as well as theoretically, whatever its roots in Marx's writings. Western Marxism, however obscurely, has long recognized these inadequacies, and attempted to correct for them. Whether the best Marxist thought of this century, in any of its very different varieties, has been successful in this endeavour is another matter. What Cohen has done, in effect, is to have made the case for orthodoxy as forcefully and lucidly as it can be made. It remains for those of us who are sympathetic to what we take to be the advances registered in the Marxism of this century to respond with equal force and lucidity.

The Politics of the Austrian 'Miracle'

On 1 March 1970, the Austrian Social-Democratic Party (SPÖ) won its first parliamentary majority. Under Bruno Kreisky's leadership it strengthened its position in three successive elections and on 6 May 1979 set an international record for social democratic parties by winning 51.03 per cent of the vote. After ten years of Social-Democratic majority government, Austria occupies an exceptional place among the Western capitalist countries. While 1980 will be a year of zero economic growth for the OECD nations, and unemployment is expected to rise to some 20 million, Austria is forecast to show an increase of 2.5 per cent in GNP, while unemployment stands at 2.3 per cent. The anticipated rate of inflation, 4.75 per cent, i.e. 1 per cent up on last year, is viewed by Austrian politicians and economists with alarm, while in most other capitalist countries this level would be unattainably low. The favourable economic situation is also accompanied by far-reaching social peace, the average strike total not having risen for many years above a level of two minutes per worker per year. In 1979, the strike rate was barely eight seconds per worker.

In the political field, the tenth year of the Kreisky government is marked by a profound crisis affecting the bourgeois opposition parties, and a new peak in the chancellor's authority and popularity. The daily newspapers, mostly anti-socialist, call him the 'Sun King', half ironically, half in earnest, and in foreign policy you have to go back to Metternich to find an Austrian leader of comparable stature.

Have the Austrian Social-Democrats possibly found the philosophers' stone for preventing capitalist crises, or are they indeed actually in the process of building a socialist society, as Benya, the president of the Austrian trade-union federation, opined last autumn? The real reasons behind the peculiarities of the Austrian situation are somewhat more prosaic, and might upset those left-wing delegates at the last SPÖ congress who liked to contrast Kreisky with Schmidt. The present leadership of the SPÖ is the most right-wing it has ever known. The success of its policies is attributable to an exceptional situation, in both economics and politics, that is now coming to an end. The mass redundancies declared earlier this year at a major electrical factory—Eumig—as well as difficulties in the nationalized steel industry, indicate that the 1980s will bring an intensification of social contradictions.

1945: The Point of Departure

The last decade of Austrian domestic politics can only be understood in the context of the basic tendencies of social development under the Second Republic, as these resulted from the situation of the country in 1945.

The Austrian bourgeoisie had always been weak, ever since the collapse of the monarchy. Its traditional economic basis lay largely outside the republic's own frontiers, in Bohemia and Moravia. In 1945, this weakness had been further intensified by the collapse of German Nazism, into whose arms the Austrian bourgeoisie had thrown itself in 1938. From the very beginning, therefore, the Austrian bourgeoisie adopted a policy of collaboration with the Social-Democrats, a policy supported by all four occupying powers. The SPÖ, for its part, faced a working class whose fighting tradition had been broken by 11 years of both local fascism and Nazism. The new leadership of the party, in the persons of Karl Renner and Adolf Schärf, had stood far to the right of Otto Bauer prior to 1934, and wanted nothing to do with the left-reformist tradition of Austro-Marxism.

The reconstruction of capitalism in Austria took place in the political framework of the grand coalition between the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the SPÖ, which lasted until 1966. (Until autumn 1947, the Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ) had also been in the government.) Since Austrian private capital was too weak to get the shattered economy on its feet, German capital having been dominant after the *Anschluss*, the state intervened as 'general capitalist'. In July 1946, with the assent of all political parties, almost all basic industries were nationalized (coal and iron-mining, steel and engineering, oil, etc.), together with the three principal banks and the electricity supply network.

Almost a fifth of the 600,000 or more workers employed in industry still work for this nationalized sector. If the other major state enterprises are added, i.e. the railways, post, tobacco, salt mines and electricity, then the proportion of Austrian workers having the state as their boss is something like a quarter. There are no satisfactory statistics as to the firms connected with the state through their loans from nationalized banks, though here state influence is only very indirectly exercised. As economic development accelerated with the introduction of the Marshall Plan, the nationalized sector came decisively to the aid of private industry by way of raw material prices that were far below world market levels. In the minds of the working class, however, this nationalization was still perceived as a major victory, and enabled the Social-Democrats, who occupied all important posts in this sector, to effect an unprecedented integration into the bourgeois state and capitalist economy.

This capitalist 'reconstruction' required an exceptionally high exploitation of the working class. By statutory and semi-statutory wage policies, the consumption level was kept catastrophically low, only reaching its 1913 level in 1950, and its 1929 level in 1954. The Social-Democrat and trade-union leaderships successfully sold this policy within the workers' movement, ultimately making direct state regulation superfluous by agreements between the trade unions and the employers' organizations. Such resistance as there was to this policy within the working class and its party was brutally smashed in a political climate marked by the hysterical anti-communism of the Cold War. A general strike for economic demands, in October 1950, is still depicted in all Austrian history books as an 'attempted communist coup'.¹

These, then, are the roots of the Austrian 'social partnership': the institutionalized collaboration between employers and trade-union leaders which in the official discourse of all governing parties is today presented as the major reason for the ensuing economic upswing.

The Grand Coalition and the Industrial Upswing

Austria saw an 'economic miracle' in the 1950s and 1960s that was in many ways similar to the West German, expressed in an extremely high rate of economic growth and the transformation of the country into a modern industrial capitalist state. Even though real wages remained below the European average right through to the 1970s, for some 25 years the working class experienced a continuing rise in its standard of living such as it had never before known. In actual

¹ The KPÖ never succeeded in overcoming its political isolation. On the one hand, it had not been identified, any more than the KPd, with any active anti-fascist struggle against Hitler among the working masses; on the other hand, it suffered from its complete political identification with the Soviet occupation authorities. The right-wing Social-Democrats thus found it easy enough to discredit it as the 'Russian party'. In 1959, the KPÖ lost its last remaining parliamentary seat, and after suffering further from the international crisis of Stalinism in 1956 and 1968-70, it now receives scarcely 1 per cent of the electoral vote, being one of the few Communist Parties in the West still completely loyal to Moscow.

fact, until recently the permanent under-payment of Austrian workers was an important support for the Austrian bourgeoisie in international competition; but in the consciousness of the working class, the undeniable material improvement and progressive social legislation was bound up with class collaboration at the state and economic levels. In contrast with this development, the First Republic, with its inflation, unemployment, material deprivation, and, finally, a lost civil war, appeared in a purely negative light.

Despite all this, the Austrian working class has retained a relatively pronounced corporate consciousness. Its organizational level is high, with some 60 per cent of all workers belonging to trade unions, and 700,000 SPÖ members in a population of 7 million; its basic political consciousness is somewhat higher than in West Germany. A strongly centralized trade-union federation integrates 16 individual unions, and in a fashion unique in Europe, all unions contain political factions connected to the 'established' parties, which gives the dominant socialist faction free rein. Even today, it is generally a publicly known fact whether one's teacher, neighbour, boss or colleague is a 'red' or a 'black'.

Yet this preservation of political identity, on both sides of the class divide, is combined with a sense of the importance of 'collaboration' for the sake of reconstruction and safeguarding its achievements. It is no accident that a relatively artificial Austrian patriotism, handed down from above, and the ideology of a specific 'Austrian nation', was only created in the Second Republic. Such an ideology had been lacking after the First World War, and its development in the Second Republic attests both to the changed balance of class forces, and to the country's altered international position. The ideology of Austrian nationhood, however, in no way expresses a nostalgia for the Hapsburg monarchy. As against any kind of German nationalism, it makes the existence of Austria as a minor state into an adequate 'historic mission' of its own. It is undeniable that the positive identification of the Austrian population with the development of the Second Republic has brought about a certain anchoring of this Austrian patriotism which was originally quite artificial. One of the strengths of the present chancellor, in fact, is that he is the only politician still active who took part in the negotiations leading to the Austrian state treaty of 1955, which provided for the withdrawal of the occupying forces and founded the nation's independence.

The economic and political system thus established came into crisis in the 1960s. Growth was now less than in the other capitalist countries, and the nationalized sector displayed a particular stagnation. The low wage level prevented the expansion of the home market, while Austrian capital was still too weak for an export offensive. The growth industries of the 1960s—electrical, chemical and automobile—were either very weak in Austria, or lacking altogether. The limitations of a purely national model of accumulation (high tariffs, etc.) now became evident. At the same time, the Grand Coalition was faced with mounting difficulties: a rigid system of spheres of influence in the

state apparatus blocked any kind of capitalist modernization.² In 1966 the People's Party profited from a period of weakness for the SPÖ brought about by the expulsion from the party of the former trade-union president and interior minister Franz Olah, and won an absolute majority for the first time. But this government, under Josef Klaus, proved viable only as a transitional regime. Linked as it was to small and medium-sized sectors of Austrian capital, it could not set any clear course for the integration of Austrian capitalism into the world market. The SPÖ, for its part, staged a rapid revival in opposition. Bruno Kreisky became leader of the party in 1967, and soon managed to settle the consequence of the Olah crisis and develop an alternative programme of reforms for wage-earners and rationalization for capital. In the 1970s, the directions laid down in the previous decade bore fruit, and brought the SPÖ to government in a quite specific situation. Kreisky made his mark on Austrian politics in a way unparalleled by any other leader. He was born in Vienna in 1911 the son of a Jewish textile manufacturer, joining the 'League of Socialist Working Youth' already in high school days. He had personal experience of the defeat of the Austrian workers' movement under the First Republic, as a functionary in the Youth League. On 12 February 1934, when civil war erupted, he was charged with printing the appeal of the party executive drafted by Otto Bauer. The party leadership, however, had forgotten that the general strike had also brought the party's own printing plant to a standstill, and Kreisky had to print a few thousand copies by hand with great difficulty. In 1935 he was sentenced together with 27 other illegal socialist activists, spending several months in prison. After the *Anschluss*, he was arrested by the Gestapo, but was nevertheless able to emigrate and spent the war years in Sweden. In 1946 he joined the Austrian diplomatic service, and was foreign minister between 1959 and 1966. In 1967 he was elected party president by the SPÖ congress, as candidate of the 'right-wing' faction that dominated the provincial organizations, and against the opposition of the powerful Vienna district and the trade-union leaders.

The Boom Victory of the SPÖ

The SPÖ's electoral victory of 1970 came at the beginning of a seven year boom that lasted from 1968 through to 1974-75, permitting the Austrian economy to survive the international recessions of 1967-69 and 1971-72, and bringing with it a major restructuring of the entire system of production. New technologies were introduced, foreign (especially West German) capital flooded into the country, and there was a reorientation towards finished products, consumer durables, and specialized chemical, engineering and electrical goods. At a time when signs of crisis were ever more serious on the international stage the Austrian economy finally managed to catch up with its most important competitors, and to expand more rapidly than most of them.

² This 'proportional system', as it is known, still persists in part today. In Vienna, for example, it is stipulated how many head teachers should be SPÖ members, how many People's Party members, and how many non-party or Freedom Party members. The Freedom Party (FPÖ) stands to the right of the People's Party, and is by far the smaller of the two bourgeois parties.

The SPÖ gave this process a boost by a resolute policy of capitalist modernization and economic integration into the world market. It rapidly concluded a special agreement with the EEC that provided new export opportunities and sharpened foreign competition within Austria itself. The nationalized sector was reorganized, and fused together in a new mammoth enterprise, the *Österreichische Industri-Aktion Gesellschaft* (ÖIAG). The processes of economic concentration and rationalization were sustained financially and politically by perfect understanding between the employers' associations and the government.

In the context of this long economic boom, the Social-Democrats also carried through a series of important reforms for the working class, including the statutory introduction of the 40-hour week, four weeks' annual holiday, improved social insurance and the legalization of abortion in the first three months of pregnancy. These improvements, to be sure, were not carried through against the employers, but always on the basis of a general consensus, yet they still had their effect on working-class consciousness and buttressed the masses' loyalty to the government.

The system of 'social partnership' marks all economic and social decision-making processes in Austria. It means a permanent collaboration and co-ordination between employers and trade-union functionaries at all levels. The apex of the system is the so-called 'parity commission', a semi-state institution appointed by the three 'social partners' (trade-union federation, employers' associations and agricultural representatives) and presided over by the chancellor, whose decisions are voluntarily accepted by both employers and trade unions. Major price increases, for example, must be sanctioned by the parity commission, which must also 'grant' wage agreements and 'recommend' rationalization and concentration of industrial enterprises. It bases its decisions on both macro-economic calculations and data about particular firms, which are elaborated by teams of economists appointed both by the trade unions and employers. If conflicts occur in particular industrial branches or enterprises, then the attempt is made to settle them by negotiation, with intervention from the highest level.

This institutionalized system of class collaboration enables firms to plan the long-run development of wage costs, and carry through decisions made on the basis of 'economic realities' against sections of the working class, with the support of the trade-union bureaucracy. As long as the economy was expanding, the trade unions could in return win reforms and improve conditions without having to mobilize their rank and file.

This system has functioned since the mid-1950s irrespective of the outcome of parliamentary elections, and unperturbed by inter-party conflicts. Yet it naturally has its effect on these, and in no other country is there such close collaboration between government and opposition in parliamentary committees and subcommittees. During the last parliamentary session, some 80 per cent of new legislation was

passed without division, and 90 per cent with the agreement of at least one of the two opposition parties. No relevant left alternative to the established policy has developed either within or outside the SPÖ. It is true that the Social-Democratic youth organization does show a certain opening to the left, yet it is not possible to speak of a real 'left wing', and while the Austro-Marxist leaders of the inter-war period are invariably honoured on festive occasions, and while the 1978 party programme still speaks of the distant goal of a 'classless society', the SPÖ's 'left-wing' tradition no longer plays any role at all in its concrete politics. I have already mentioned the decline of the Austrian Communist Party. Those intellectuals who broke with it, such as Ernst Fischer and Franz Marek, while they have contributed to the development of Marxist debate on the international stage, were not involved in any new political movement in Austria itself. In the context of the world-wide radicalization of youth, a radical left did develop, but its field of influence has been very restricted, and its only real effect has been in the 1978 movement against nuclear power. It cannot pose any alternative to the Kreisky leadership.

The Austrian Position in the International Crisis

The mustering of the working class behind the Social-Democrat government permitted Austria to face the crisis of 1974-75 far better than its Western neighbours. This time it could not actually escape the economic downturn, as it had the previous recessions, and in 1975 the GNP actually declined by 2 per cent; yet unemployment still did not rise above 2.1 per cent. In the following years Austria continued to profit more from the upswing than did its competitors, and even now it would be exaggerated to speak of an actual economic crisis. The SPÖ's electoral propaganda about the 'Austrian way' of tackling the crisis, and the priority of 'safeguarding jobs', which is how it won the elections of 1975 and 1979, does indeed correspond to a certain objective reality. This favourable development can be seen by comparing per capita GNP in US dollars (at current prices) as follows:

| | <i>Austria</i> | <i>Germany F.R.</i> | <i>France</i> | <i>OECD average</i> | <i>Great Britain</i> |
|------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1969 | 1750 | 2530 | 2680 | 1890 | 2000 |
| 1975 | 5010 | 6780 | 6420 | 4550 | 4060 |
| 1978 | 7710 | 10,350 | 8760 | 6370 | 5490 |

The reasons for this prosperity are many. On the one hand, Austrian industry has reached a high level of specialization, making its export markets less liable to conjunctural fluctuations. Its most important trading partner, West Germany, can still continue its purchases through the crisis, on account of its strong position, and the social stability in Austria represents an added bonus for exporters (quality, firm delivery dates, etc.). The high proportion of Austria's trade with the East—almost a fifth of its exports going to the Comecon countries and Yugoslavia—has a further stabilizing effect. On the other hand, the government has pursued a consistent anti-cyclical policy, increasing the budget deficit from 11 per cent of total state spending in 1974 to 20 per cent in 1975. In the nationalized sector, substantial redundancies were avoided by deliberate political decision, by retraining and a halt

on hiring. The repatriation of some 70,000 Yugoslav and Turkish workers also made its contribution to easing the unemployment figures.

The SPÖ's electoral successes, however, cannot simply be explained by its ability to mobilize its traditional working-class base. It has also managed to attract sections of the electorate who were previously undecided or conservative. In 1979 the SPÖ made far greater inroads in the agricultural districts traditionally dominated by the People's Party than it did in the towns. Kreisky is indeed an outstanding individual, being the most important political figure of the Second Republic and enjoying an almost monarchical respect. His success among the most varied strata of the population is not just a function of his charisma, but depends on his relative independence from the SPÖ apparatus. Since he faces no danger from the left, he manages time and again to show a conciliatory face to the most reactionary forces. He initiated a reconciliation between Social-Democracy and the Catholic church, for example, and countered the chauvinist German-nationalist forces in Carinthia by legislation directed against the Slovenian minority. The Austrian Social Democrats have also consistently sought to integrate the 'new left' as far as possible, in a quite different way from their German counterparts. There is virtually no equivalent of the German *berufsverbot*. Yet in the nationalized industries dominated by the Social Democrats there are repeated instances of victimization of critical workers.

Austrian foreign policy, too, has unmistakably borne Kreisky's personal mark throughout the seventies. The Austrian state treaty of 1955, concluded with the four occupying powers, established Austrian independence and normalized the country's relations with the outside world. That same year, the Austrian parliament passed a constitutional law providing for permanent neutrality. This neutrality, however, was never understood in the sense of 'positive neutralism' or 'non-alignment'. All the established parties agree that Austria forms part of the 'Western world', and this is expressed in the country's economic and political integration into capitalist Europe. At the same time, however, Austria enjoys a special status vis-à-vis Eastern Europe, owing to its neutrality, while Vienna's good relations with its eastern neighbours (Czechoslovakia excepted) and Moscow are independent of the current state of East-West relations in general.

In the past, Austrian foreign policy had been limited to its relations with adjacent states, negotiations with Italy over the rights of the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol, and a pro-Western stance in the United Nations. On occasion, Austria managed to play a 'mediating' role between East and West, as for example in 1963, when the Kennedy-Khrushchev summit took place in Vienna. Kreisky, however, has made a significant turn in foreign policy, starting to take initiatives in the direction of the Third World, and especially the Near East. As a committed anti-Zionist of Jewish extraction, he has struggled for years for international recognition of the PLO, and won significant respect in the Arab countries. At the same time, he has appealed to the industrialized countries for a kind of 'Marshall plan' for the

Third World, most recently at the UNIDO conference in New Delhi in January 1980, and the UN general assembly last October. Undoubtedly, Kreisky's international prestige goes beyond the bounds of the minor state that he represents. This new course in foreign policy, however, in no way prevents him from representing a radically anti-communist position, even against 'Euro-communism'. He has even defended imperialist domination in all parts of the world, e.g. Indochina, and has had good relations with the Shah, South Africa, the regime in Thailand, etc.

With this policy, however, Austrian industry won new export markets, while Vienna, already for many years the headquarters of OPEC, became a second UN centre in Europe alongside Geneva. As a small country, still formally neutral, Austria thus managed, under social-democratic leadership, to find a highly advantageous place in the interstices of imperialist world policy.

Kreisky has thus managed, in both the domestic and foreign spheres, to have the best of both worlds. At home his party has aimed to win over 'liberal and open-minded opinion leaders' (in the words of SPÖ strategist Karl Blecha), without coming into conflict with reactionary circles. Social Democratic government has been able to satisfy more working class needs than was previously the case, without risking confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions, with the absence of political polarization, the growth in the SPÖ's electoral strength could appear as a 'natural' accompaniment to the increasing proletarianization of the population. The long-term trend is unmistakable as the SPÖ vote has slowly, but steadily risen from 38.7 per cent in 1949 to the absolute majority of 51 per cent won in the 1979 general election.

The Limits of Social-Democratic Policy

When the Kriesky government took office in 1970, it proclaimed its intention to democratize social life by injecting 'more transparency'. In reality, however, the result has not been an ever more perfect welfare state, but rather an increase in economic problems and a scaling down of the Social-Democrats' pretensions of reform. Since 1977, financial policy has prioritized deficit reduction and the balancing of the budget. An explosion of taxation affecting wage-earners has been matched by the tendency to restrain social expenditure. The 'incomes policy' agreed by the social partners, with a view to protecting jobs, has meant a stagnation in real wages for the majority of the working class, at least since 1978. Undoubtedly the living standard of the masses has improved in ten years of Social-Democratic government, yet in no way has the balance of social forces or the mechanisms of social functioning been decisively changed. The government is only using the ordinary levers of crisis management.

Given the electoral victory of 6 May 1979, it is easy to forget how only six months previously the SPÖ met with a defeat such as it had not experienced in years. On 5 November 1978 it lost a referendum over the building of an atomic power station at Zwentendorf, while a month

before it had already seen its share of the vote in the Vienna local elections decline from 60.2 per cent to 57.2 per cent. In the working-class districts, in particular, its proportion of the vote was far below accustomed levels, and it later turned out that some 25,000 SPÖ members had not bothered to go to the polls. The rank and file were discomfited by disagreements among the party leaders, and by scandals. The bourgeois opposition parties were on the offensive. The SPÖ only managed to overcome this period of weakness by an offensive of its own, preparing for the general election with a cautious but distinct 'bourgeois-block propaganda' against a possible ÖVP/FPÖ coalition as the alternative to Kreisky.

Behind this development lie more fundamental trends. Support for the Social-Democrats is bound to decline, if year after year they can offer nothing more than capitalist crisis management. The party leadership itself encountered a critical distancing by young people in the months before the election when the anti-nuclear movement developed into a mass campaign. True, the fact that only six months later the majority of young people still voted for Kreisky shows the limits of this radicalization and the absence of any alternative. Yet the phenomenon itself is incontestable. The Social-Democrats promise to 'keep things as they are', a defensive programme that in the long run makes it ever harder to sell a capitalist austerity policy. On top of this, those special factors that gave Austria its particular position in the world market are now slowly being eroded. The Austrian economy has come to the end of its catching-up phase, and the signs of heavier international competition are ever more noticeable. Trade with the Eastern block remains sluggish, given the burden of debt already existing, while rationalizations in the nationalized industries have put many people's jobs in question.

It is an expression of this changed situation that the institutionalized 'social partnership' has to find a new legitimation. If it could formerly appear as a guarantee for a flourishing economy, with real improvements for the working class, its claim today is far more modest. In the 1970s the social partnership policy was bound up with certain basically positive experiences for the working class, leading to rising political reserves for class collaboration. The working-class radicalization that took place in Western Europe passed Austria by. In the 1980s, on the other hand, these political reserves will be used up. The political consequences of the changing objective situation are unpredictable. Their loss of the 1979 election threw both major bourgeois opposition parties into crisis. The FPÖ right-winger Alexander Götz, who led the offensive against Kreisky, has resigned as party leader, as has his counterpart in the People's Party, Josef Taus. A tough, anti-socialist right-wing policy, such as is represented in West Germany by Franz-Josef Strauss, is not on the cards even in the medium term, given the objective weakness of the Austrian bourgeoisie. The Social-Democrats thus see themselves free from challenge either from the right or from the left. The most probable outcome, therefore, is that their increasing difficulties will find expression within the party itself. For years, already, there has been a jockeying for position to succeed Kreisky, the most prominent candidates being the

Finance Minister Hannes Androsch, the parliamentary leader Heinz Fischer, and the Mayor of Vienna Leopold Gratz. Androsch is seen as representing the technocratic wing of the party, and is closely connected with the trade-union leaders. His good relations with industry would make him the ideal leader of a coalition. Leopold Gratz, for his part, represents the party apparatus, though at present he seems to lie somewhat behind in the succession game. This increases the chances of Heinz Fischer, considered in spo circles as able to play a balancing role as compromise candidate, should Androsch, who is not particularly popular, come up against serious resistance among the rank and file. The spo left is concentrating on preventing Androsch's victory, though none of the other candidates can present themselves as to the left of the present government. These candidates are all backed by different interest groups that have repeatedly come into open conflict. The decisive question, however will be how the Austrian working class react to this new situation. Austrian social democracy was re-created in the postwar epoch in conditions which greatly favoured the conservative trends which dominated its leadership; it now seems that they have almost run through this legacy of good fortune.

Postscript:

This article was written in January 1980. Since that time the spo has been wracked by a major corruption scandal in connection with the building of a new general hospital ('Allgemeines Krankenhaus') as well as by massive protests against the government's decision to supply tanks to Pinochet. These events have not only weakened the position of Androsch as the putative successor to Kreisky, but also that of the spo as such. Kreisky has put his reputation on the line in attempting to restore party morale. By saying 'Androsch or myself,' he has made it clear who will be the scapegoat for the scandals; in the meantime the spo left is demanding a debate around programmatic questions. All this shows even more clearly that the conditions which so long favoured spo hegemony over Austrian politics are now deteriorating.



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Sneevliet and the Birth of Asian Communism

Henk Sneevliet was a founder-activist of three Communist movements—the Dutch, Indonesian and Chinese—and played a prominent role in the early years of the Communist International. Arguably no other socialist of the period had such a creative and active internationalist career. His profound understanding and sympathy for Asian nationalism and his direct experience in the Communist movements in China and Indonesia made Sneevliet an unparalleled figure in the early Comintern. Founder of the first Marxist party in colonial Asia, the Indonesian Social Democratic Association (ISDV), Secretary of the Commission on National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Comintern, and representative of the International in China in the early twenties, Sneevliet was the architect of the ‘bloc within’ strategy for Communist parties in colonial countries. After the death of Lenin in 1924 and the increasing subjection of the Comintern to Russian national and state interests, Sneevliet broke decisively with Moscow, and founded one of the few independent Marxist parties with popular support outside the Third International in the thirties: the Dutch Revolutionary

Socialist Party. It has been remarked that 'Sneevliet's life history, like that of Ho Chi Minh, must surely be one of the great unwritten Odysseys of our time.'¹ But his achievements as a revolutionary remain largely unrecognized, in part due to the absence of any written legacy by Sneevliet, but also due to his break with the Comintern. Two books on his life have appeared in Dutch in recent years, Fritjof Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet: Een Politieke Biografie* and Max Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet: Revolutionair—Socialist in Europa en Azië*.² Rather than compare the respective merits of these two works, this article will try to provide a brief outline of Sneevliet's remarkable career for the English-speaking reader.

Henk Sneevliet was born in Rotterdam in 1883. From an early age he became involved in the Dutch socialist movement and in 1902 he joined the Dutch Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP).³ Through his close relationship with Henriette Roland-Holst, Sneevliet became attracted to the left-wing opposition group within the SDAP associated with the journal, *De Nieuwe Tijd*. This group, later known as the Tribuneists, took a position similar to that adopted by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht within the German Social Democratic Party. However, unlike their German comrades, the Dutch revolutionary socialist split from the mainstream Social Democrats before the First World War.⁴

Sneevliet did not join the new party at first, but continued to work within the Railway and Tramworkers Union, of which he became chairman in 1910 at the age of 27. His initial hesitation in joining the new revolutionary Social Democratic Party (SPD) largely stemmed from a concern that the organisation did not have sufficient roots in the Dutch working class. The outbreak of an international seamen's strike in 1911 and the lack of support given to it by the orthodox SDAP, led Sneevliet to leave the party and join the revolutionary SPD.⁵ Continuing unease with the sectarian policies of the SPD, however, prompted him in 1913 to leave Holland for Indonesia, then the Dutch East Indies. This was not so unusual a choice as it might at first seem. Unlike British colonies in Asia, the Dutch East Indies had a sizeable settler community. Moreover, at least until 1920 the political regime in the colony was relatively liberal and revolutionary socialists did not find it

¹ Peter Worsley, *The Third World*, London 1967, p. 337.

² Fritjof Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet: Een Politieke Biografie*, Amsterdam 1974; Max Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet: Revolutionair Socialist in Europa en Azië*, Nijmegen 1976. The latter account is by far the more substantial as it is written by a former comrade who was active with Sneevliet in the wartime resistance against the Nazis. No satisfactory account of Sneevliet's life exists in English.

³ Social Democratische Arbeiders Partij (SDAP) was founded in 1894.

⁴ The revolutionary group led by Henriette Roland-Holst, Herman Gorter, and Anton Pannekoek broke away in 1909 and set up the Sociaal Democratische Partij (SDP). The Socialist International did attempt to intervene to reunite the two Dutch socialist parties but to no avail since the SDP would only consider unity if it preserved freedom of propaganda and its own paper (*De Tribune*). The SDP remained one of the few cases in Europe where the revolutionary wing of the socialist party broke away before the Bolshevik Revolution. See Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet*, p. 48, 83.

⁵ The SDAP had refused to back striking seamen and dockers in Amsterdam who belonged not to the Social Democrat trade union federation, NVV, but to the anarcho-sindicalist NAS. See Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet*, p. 71.

difficult to find work there whilst at the same time remaining politically active.

Sneevliet's work in just over four years in Indonesia is unique in the history of the international socialist movement.⁶ Within weeks of his arrival in the colony, he threw himself energetically into the work of organizing the Railway and Tramworkers' Union (VSTP—Vereeniging voor Spoor en Tramweg Personeel) and editing its journal, *De Volharding*. Under Sneevliet's influence and direction, the VSTP developed into a modern well-organized trade union. From 1915 on its membership was composed largely of Indonesians and it was to exercise a profound influence on the later development of the Indonesian labour movement. When, in 1920, the Perserikatan Kommunist Indonesia—the Indonesian Communist Party—was formed, the VSTP provided the proletarian core around which the party was built. In May 1914 Sneevliet had founded the PKI's forerunner and the first Marxist party in colonial Asia, the Indies Social Democratic Association (ISDV—Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging). Sneevliet was determined from the beginning that the ISDV should not be an adjunct of Dutch Social Democracy, despite the opposition of other Dutch socialists who saw little hope of Marxism finding fertile soil in a colonial and peasant society, and embarked on the task of building an independent Indonesian socialist movement. Although the original membership of less than one hundred were nearly all Dutch teachers or railway workers, Sneevliet was acutely conscious of the urgent need to attract Indonesians if the party was to become a viable and potent force. Within a few years it had done this and a number of young Indonesians became prominent in the ISDV, among them Semaun, Darsono and Tan Malaka. Of these Tan Malaka was by far the most able and original leader and in his way a genuine successor to Sneevliet, achieving the rare reversal of Sneevliet's international trajectory by winning a seat in the Dutch Parliament for the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN).⁷

⁶ On Sneevliet's activities in Indonesia see Perthus, p. 89–201; Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet*, p. 22–6; A.K. Priggodigdo, *Sedjarah Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia*, Djakarta 1949, pp. 12 and 22; R.T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, London 1965, pp. 7–36; Jeanne S. Mintz, 'Marxism in Indonesia', in Frank N. Trager (ed.), *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, Stanford 1959, pp. 176–180; George McTunran Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, London 1953, pp. 73–74.

⁷ Tan Malaka became chairman of the Indonesian Communist Party while still in his twenties. In the Dutch elections of 1922 Malaka outpolled the Dutch Communist Party's leading theoretician, Van Ravestyn, and would have become a Communist member of the Dutch parliament except that he was found to be under-age. He represented the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922, and was thereafter the Comintern representative in Southeast Asia. Malaka broke with the Comintern in 1927 but remained a revolutionary socialist. He was briefly active in the Philippine nationalist movement in the late twenties, and lived in China for many years. He returned to Indonesia in 1942 after a twenty years absence, formed a revolutionary opposition to Sukarno in 1946, and was arrested and executed in 1949. The only full biography of Malaka is Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka Stryder voor Indonesië's Vrijheid—Levensloop van 1897 tot 1945*, Gravenhage 1976. The English reader is referred to McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, pp. 114–117 and 121–124; Benedict R. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution, Occupation and Resistance, 1944–46*, Ithaca and London 1972, pp. 269–295; and R. Mrazek, 'Tan Malaka: A Political Personality's Structure of Experience,' *Indonesia*, October 1972, pp. 1–48.

Although Sneevliet was successful in winning a steady number of Indonesian recruits to the position of revolutionary Marxism adopted by the ISDV, he also saw the need for the party to make a wider intervention in Indonesian society. The Indonesian working class was very small at this time and concentrated in the two Dutch colonial commercial centres of Semarang and Surabaya. Sneevliet realized that if Marxism was to make an impact on Indonesian, or any Asian, society it was of vital importance that propaganda work be conducted amongst the masses as a whole, including the peasantry. He believed that the objective conditions for this work were ripe, particularly as much of Java's peasantry in the late nineteenth century had been transformed from subsistence rice farmers to sugar plantation workers.⁸ Politically too the awakening of the Indonesian peasantry had been signalled by the formation of the first nationalist party with mass backing, the Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association) in 1911. Like Lenin, Sneevliet was deeply aware that if the rising nationalist tide in Asia could be linked to or harnessed by the socialist movement, its political repercussions would be revolutionary.

The 'Bloc Within' Strategy

The Sarekat Islam had been established originally by Indonesian cloth manufacturers and traders as an association to protect their interests against the encroachment of Chinese merchants. It was an indication of the weakness of the Indonesian bourgeoisie, however, that this class was unable to retain effective hold of the organisation and the Sarekat Islam rapidly assumed the character of a mass albeit amorphous party with considerable peasant support. The Dutch East Indies colonial government tolerated the existence of the organization, some of its more liberal members welcoming it as a sign of 'native awakening' and progress. For Sneevliet the Sarekat Islam presented the ideal vehicle through which to advance a program of revolutionary socialism in the colony. This strategy, the first concrete example of a Marxist party attempting to infiltrate another party and form cells within it as a means of developing its own propaganda and contacts amongst the masses, was to pay large dividends for the ISDV in the following years.

The pursuit of a 'bloc within' strategy by the ISDV within the Sarekat Islam was aided by the extremely decentralized character of the nationalist organization, which Sneevliet saw as the Indonesian equivalent of the nineteenth century British Chartist movement.⁹ While the Sarekat Islam was tolerated and sanctioned by the colonial authorities at a local branch level, no national organization as such was allowed, only an extremely loose federation. Clearly this made the ISDV's task of infiltrating the Sarekat Islam easier and it was several years before a coherent right-wing opposition to the Marxist group was to emerge in the nationalist organization.

In several areas of Java Sarekat Islam branches fell wholly under the sway of the Marxist ISDV and became increasingly radical. The effect of the strategy manifested itself clearly at the Second National Congress

⁸ This transformation is described in Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Innovation*, Berkeley 1968.

⁹ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 19.

of the Sarekat Islam in October 1917. As a result of mounting pressure from the growing number of Marxist orientated local branches of the Sarekat Islam, the organization's weak central leadership, with no effective means at its disposal to discipline the dissidents, was forced to compromise its original modernist Islamic tenets in the direction of revolutionary Marxism. Thus the October 1917 congress abandoned the Sarekat Islam's original demand for self-government in favour of outright independence, adding, moreover, that if non-violent means to obtain this goal were not fruitful, another approach might be necessary. The congress also came out with a forthright denunciation of what it termed 'sinful capitalism', explicitly condemning the hold that the great Dutch corporations and the Chinese middle class exercised over the Indonesian economy. In the face of this growing radicalization of the Sarekat Islam, the weakness of the Indonesian bourgeoisie was striking.

The outbreak of the February 1917 revolution in Russia was heralded by the ISDV with great acclaim. Sneevliet saw in the overthrow of autocracy in Europe's most backward state an act of great importance for colonial Asia.¹⁰ He called on the Indonesian people to be ready to follow the example of the Russian masses, and the following year, when revolutionary contagion spread to Germany and even the Netherlands, Sneevliet began organizing soldiers' and sailors' councils.¹¹ For the colonial authorities this alarming turn of events called for immediate action and in December 1918 the Dutch Governor General expelled Sneevliet from Indonesia.

It is a measure of Sneevliet's success in Indonesia, however, that revolutionary Marxism continued to flourish in his absence. The process of infiltration of Indonesian members of the ISDV into positions of leadership within local branches of the Sarekat Islam continued. In May 1920 the ISDV dissolved itself and formally established the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and adhered to the Comintern. By 1922 the PKI and its affiliated organizations had 50,000 members, and most of the Indonesian trade union movement was under its control. This was at a time when the Chinese Communist Party counted its membership in hundreds, and the Vietnamese and Indian communist movements were non-existent.

Returning to Holland Sneevliet involved himself once more in the Dutch socialist movement, while at the same time representing the Indonesian Communist Party in the colonial metropolis. In his latter capacity Sneevliet was PKI delegate at the famous Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. In contrast to the First Congress of the Communist International, the Second was to devote considerable attention to the infant revolutionary movement in Asia, the Indian communist M. N. Roy remarking that he had been able 'to take part seriously in a discussion of the colonial question at a congress of the revolutionary proletariat for the first time'.¹² Sneevliet was appointed Secretary of

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29ff.

¹¹ Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet*, pp. 182-187.

¹² E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, Volume Three, London 1953, p. 252. For a discussion of the Congress see Carr, pp. 251-256; V.I. Lenin, 'Report

the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions at the Congress, the other members of the Commission included Lenin and Roy. Sneeveliet's position was unique. Not only was he the sole European Communist present at the discussion with wide experience of the revolutionary movements in Asia, but also the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was at the time the only Asian Marxist party of any significance.¹³

The starting point of both Lenin's and Sneeveliet's views on Asia was that the fragility and infancy of the Communist movement demanded that a firm base be established in the peasantry, which could only be done by forging an alliance with bourgeois nationalist parties. Lenin formulated his position thus: 'It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them, can pursue communist tactics and a communist policy, without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support... we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited.'¹⁴

Lenin and Sneeveliet saw clearly that the way forward for the Communist movement in Asia lay in temporary alliance with the bourgeois democratic parties, whilst at the same time preserving their full independence. Roy, for his part, was firmly of the opinion that it was no business of Communists to ally themselves with bourgeois nationalists even on a short-term basis. Sneeveliet, as Secretary of the Commission, resolved the problem of the difference of positions by getting the Congress to adopt both the preliminary thesis (Lenin and Sneeveliet) and the supplementary Roy thesis. In practice, however, it was the Lenin-Sneeveliet view which was to dominate the policy of the Comintern in Asia over the following years.

The Chinese Revolution

Soon after the Congress Sneeveliet was appointed Comintern representative for the Far East and Southeast Asia.¹⁵ When he arrived in Shanghai in June 1921, his responsibilities included China, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indo-China and Indonesia.¹⁶ Prior to his arrival in China,

on the Commission on National and Colonial Questions,' *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp. 240-245; Perthus, *Hank Sneeveliet*, pp. 220-225; and Tichelman, *Hank Sneeveliet*, pp. 31-37.

¹³ The Chinese Communist Party was founded in July 1921. The Indo-Chinese Communist Party was not established by Ho Chi Minh until 1930.

¹⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp. 241-242.

¹⁵ Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 516-518; Sneeveliet who used the pseudonym 'Marling' for the first time at the Congress was also appointed to the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Proposals by Sneeveliet that the Comintern establish Middle East and Far East bureaux were accepted at the Second Congress, as well as a proposal that Asian communists should be brought to Soviet Russia for training.

¹⁶ The best sources in English for Sneeveliet's period in China are Harold Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, Stanford 1959, pp. 58-62, and 'Documents on the Comintern and the Chinese Revolution', *China Quarterly*, No. 45, January-March

the Comintern had established a Far Eastern Secretariat in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. This bureau was composed entirely of Russians and its only contacts in China were with the northern warlord Wu Pei-Fu. There were almost no contacts with Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and the Kuomintang, and it was Sneevliet who quickly saw that it was the KMT which represented the mainstream of Chinese nationalism. His belief in the revolutionary potential of the Kuomintang was reinforced in January 1922 when a major seamen's strike took place in Canton and Hong Kong. Sneevliet found that the KMT already had substantial links with the young Chinese labour movement. As Sneevliet himself wrote, 'If we Communists, who are actively trying to establish links with the workers of north China are to work successfully, we must take care to maintain friendly relations with the Nationalists. The thesis of the Second Congress (of the Comintern) can only be applied in China by offering active support to the nationalist elements of the south (i.e. the KMT). We have as our task to keep the revolutionary nationalist elements with us and to drive the whole movement to the left.'¹⁷

In May 1921 Sun Yat-Sen had proclaimed a Chinese Republic in Canton. Sneevliet entered into conversation with the nationalist leader and tried to persuade Sun that in order to advance its cause the Kuomintang should cooperate with the Comintern and the newly founded Chinese Communist Party.¹⁸ Sneevliet argued forcefully for the democratization of the nationalist organization and for the necessity for propaganda amongst the peasants and the workers, pointing to the example of the Sarekat Islam in Indonesia. Sun Yat-Sen, however, still felt he could rely on military means and was unwilling to accept the entry of the Communist Party en masse into the Kuomintang.

Unperturbed by the initial lack of a favourable response from the nationalist leader, Sneevliet set to work to convince an initially reluctant Chinese Communist Party that it should work within the Kuomintang. Opposition to this strategy stemmed largely from the view that the KMT was not a significant political force and would not develop into a mass movement. The matter was finally brought to a head at a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party called by Sneevliet in Hangchow in August 1922. By the time of the meeting events had turned decisively in a direction that reinforced Sneevliet's view that the Communist Party should work within the

1971, pp. 2-36. These two accounts are partly based on conversations Isaac had with Sneevliet in Amsterdam in August 1935. See also Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 516-518, 533-591; Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, Harmondsworth 1972, p. 115 and pp. 182-189; Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet*, pp. 220-299; Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet*, pp. 37-54. Perthus and Tichelman have used previously closed Dutch archives. Within the Chinese Communist Party Sneevliet was known by the name Ti-san Kuo-chi.

¹⁷ Marling (Sneevliet), 'Die Revolutionär Nationalistische Bewegung in Süd-China,' *Kommunistische Internationale*, 13 September 1922, cited by Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet*, pp. 271-272.

¹⁸ The Chinese Communist Party was established in July 1921. It has never been clear whether Sneevliet was present at the founding congress held in a girls school in the French concession in the city. One of the early leaders of the CCP, Chang Kuo-Tao, has said he was. Cf. Chang Kuo-Tao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-27*, Lawrence 1971, pp. 136-152 ff.

Kuomintang, whilst at the same time preserving its independence of organization and propaganda within the movement. In June 1922 Sun Yat-Sen had been evicted from Canton by the warlord General Chen Chiung-Ming and was now far more receptive to offers of political support from whatever quarter. Externally attempts by the Kuomintang to solicit aid from the imperialist nations had met with rebuffs, so increasingly Sun saw the Soviet Union as a potential ally. Within the Comintern itself the so-called 'Irkutsk line' of trying to establish links with Northern warlords was dramatically reversed as a result of a report submitted by Sneeveliet to the Executive Committee of the International in July 1922, and Sneeveliet's 'bloc-within' strategy was endorsed as being more congruent with the decisions of the Second Congress and the concrete political realities of China.¹⁹ At the Hangchow meeting Sneeveliet argued that the past orientation of the Comintern in China had been wrong and that the Kuomintang's loose organizational form made it comparatively easy for the Communist Party to work within it. Although some members of the Central Committee, especially Chang Kuo-Tao, were still opposed, Sneeveliet's line was accepted and the Party embarked on a policy of entrisism into the Kuomintang.²⁰

In a conversation in 1935 with Harold Isaacs, Sneeveliet stated that he had advocated the 'bloc within' strategy for the Chinese Communist Party for three reasons. First, his experience in Indonesia and the success of the Communists there in working within the Sarekat Islam indicated that this could be repeated; secondly, the Theses on the National question adopted at the 1920 Comintern Congress seemed to be particularly applicable to China; and thirdly, the isolation of the Communist Party from the working class when the Kuomintang had substantial links with proletarian organizations in South China underlined the necessity of working within the nationalist movement.

The success of Sneeveliet's strategy in China led to a great expansion of the influence of the Communist Party in the labour movement. When in 1925 the great 'Movement of 30 May' spread over Southern China, the Communists were in its vanguard, inspiring the boycott of Western concessions and leading the Canton General Strike. The 'bloc within' strategy advocated so forcefully by Sneeveliet was in the circumstances of the early 1920s manifestly the correct one for the Chinese Communist Party to follow. However, Sneeveliet underestimated the differences between China and Indonesia. In China the national bourgeoisie was a far stronger class than in Indonesia, and moreover, the Kuomintang, unlike the Sarekat Islam, was already a semi-government with its own armed forces. Even more important in determining for the failure of Sneeveliet's line as a long-term strategy was the complete subordination of the Chinese Communist Party and of the Comintern to the national interests of Soviet Russia. The Communist Party worked energetically within the Kuomintang, but without ever presenting a program of its own, and consequently became a mere appendage of the

¹⁹ Sneeveliet's views on China were expressed in an article he wrote at the time, see Maring, 'Die Revolutionär Nationalistische'.

²⁰ According to Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 482, Mao Tse-Tung although initially supporting Chang Kuo-Tao, later backed the Sneeveliet line.

nationalist organization. After Sneevliet's departure from China, Moscow increasingly urged the Chinese Communist Party to see its first duty as making the Kuomintang a reliable ally of Soviet Russia.

Sneevliet, on the other hand, strove to assist the Chinese masses not to protect Russian national interest at the expense of international revolution. He was bitterly opposed to Stalin's fatal error of organizational self-effacement before Chiang Kai-Shek which led to the destruction of China's urban communist movement in 1926-27.²¹ Although he overestimated the socialist inclinations of Sun Yat-Sen, he was far sighted in realising the anti-imperialist potential of the social forces that the KMT drew upon. Sneevliet left China in 1923, working briefly in the new Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern in Vladivostok, before returning to Moscow where he worked on Chinese and Indonesian affairs. He was offered the post of Soviet Consul in Canton, but Sneevliet had no wish to enter into the service of the Russian state as opposed to the Comintern. Quite beyond Sneevliet's expectations, Comintern policies in China became wholly subject to Russian interests which above all demanded a firm alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek, who took over the leadership of the Kuomintang with the death of Sun Yat-Sen in 1925, and the interests of the Communist Party were forgotten. This was to remain the case even after Chiang's first anti-communist coup of 20 March 1926, when the Comintern continued to call on the Communist Party to work with the Kuomintang.

The Break With Stalinism

In April 1924 Sneevliet left Moscow for the Netherlands and became active once again in the Dutch Communist Party (CPN) and at the same time became chairman of the National Arbeids Secretariaat (NAS), a small Dutch trade union federation that was affiliated to the Profintern, the trade union affiliate of the Comintern. He continued to take a close interest in Asian affairs and in 1925 established an office of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in Amsterdam. But Sneevliet's growing identification with the position of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union and his leadership of the opposition in the Dutch Communist Party isolated him from the Comintern and forced him to devote his political energies to the Dutch socialist movement. He maintained close contact with 'Opposition' communists such as Souvarine and Rosmer in France, with Fischer and Maslow in Germany, with Andres Nin, and with his former Comintern comrade Roy.

In 1927, Sneevliet broke completely with the Dutch Communist Party and the Comintern, and two years later formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party, one of the few independent Marxist parties with popular support in Europe in the 1930s. Although Sneevliet had identified with the 'Left Opposition' in Russia, his position differed from that of

²¹ Michael Borodin who became chief political adviser to the Kuomintang represented not the Comintern but the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party. The 'bloc-within' strategy should not be confused with the later Comintern conception of the KMT as a 'four class block': peasants, workers, middle class and progressive national bourgeoisie. Sneevliet was not the originator of this view and did not support it.

Trotsky's on several issues. Trotsky was opposed to the formation of new Marxist parties in 1929 and also criticised Sneeveliet's leadership of the NAS as sectarian. On the international terrain, however, Sneeveliet identified closely with the positions adopted by Trotsky, differing sharply only in their analysis of China. Trotsky had been violently opposed to the 'bloc within' strategy. Sneeveliet, despite the great defeats suffered by the Chinese Communist Party in 1926-1927, continued to defend the strategy provided that the Communists were able to preserve their freedom of organization and propaganda and not be subject to Russian interests.²²

In 1933 Sneeveliet was imprisoned for six months for his support of the sailors who had mutinied on the Dutch cruiser 'Zeven Provinciën' in Indonesian waters. Whilst serving his sentence he was elected a member of the Dutch Parliament representing the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Two years later the RSP fused with the Independent Socialists, a left splinter group from the Social Democrats, to form the Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party (RSAP). In the late 1930s Sneeveliet's relations with Trotsky, now in exile in Mexico, deteriorated further. Sneeveliet and the RSAP were enthusiastic supporters of Andres Nin's POUM during the Spanish Civil War and were disturbed by Trotsky's critical stance towards the POUM.

An even more fundamental difference of opinion occurred over Trotsky's establishment of the Fourth International in 1938. Sneeveliet was firmly opposed to a new International, particularly at a time when the international workers' movement was clearly in disarray and retreat. This was a body blow to Trotsky as the RSAP was a far more significant political force than any of the tiny groups which adhered to the Fourth International.

With the Nazi invasion and occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940, Sneeveliet transformed the RSAP into the Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg Front (MLL) and established the first resistance movement. In February 1941 the MLL organized strikes in Amsterdam in protest against the persecution of the city's Jewish population. The following year, however, Sneeveliet was arrested by the Gestapo and on 12 April 1942 was executed with seven other comrades. A true internationalist to the end, he spent his last months organizing propaganda amongst German Army units in Holland.

²² Sneeveliet knew Trotsky well from his Comintern days and met him again in Copenhagen in 1932 and Paris in 1933. See Perthus, *Hank Sneeveliet*, p. 364; Isaac Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1929-40*, Oxford 1963, p. 186.

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A Radio Talk on Brecht

Walter Benjamin

There is always something deceitful in trying to talk about living writers impartially and objectively. Nor is this only a personal problem —though no one can help being affected in a thousand and one ways by the aura that surrounds a contemporary. The deception I have in mind is above all a scientific one. This certainly does not mean that one should simply drift along in a lecture such as this and trust one's luck to a vague series of associations, anecdotes and analogies. On the contrary, if literary history is inappropriate here, what is appropriate is criticism. And this is a form that grows stronger by rejecting cheap pretentiousness of any kind, and holding resolutely to precisely those aspects of someone's work that are of contemporary relevance. It would be foolish in Brecht's case, for example, to pass over in silence the inherent dangers in his creativity, the question of his political attitude, or even the business of plagiarism. That would make any real access to his work impossible. On the contrary, it is more important to tackle these question, which, in turn, require a conception of his theoretical convictions, his manner of speech, and even his external appearance; than to reel off his works in chronological sequence. And for this same reason we make no bones about beginning with his most recent book, something that would certainly be a mistake for the literary historian, but which is all the more justified for the critic because this work, entitled *Versuche* [*Experiments*], is one of Brecht's most difficult, and requires us to grasp the whole phenomenon at once, fully and frontally.

Were we to demand that the author of *Versuche* confess his beliefs as roughly as he demands this of his heroes, we should hear him speak as follows: 'I refuse to exploit my talent in a supposedly uncommitted way. I use it as an educator, a politician, and organizer. There is no reproach made against my literary activity—that I am a plagiarist, agitator or saboteur—that I would not accept as something honourable for my non-literary, anonymous but deliberate actions.' It is clear, then, that Brecht belongs to that small minority of those now writing in Germany who ask themselves to what end they should use their talent, and only do use it when they are convinced of the necessity to do so, calling a halt whenever this touchstone is not met. The '*Experiments*' are points of application of Brecht's talent. What is new here is that the full significance of these applications is unconcealed; for their sake the writer takes leave of his 'work', and, like an engineer drilling for oil in the desert, directs his attention to precisely calculated points in the desert of the present. Here these points of application include the theatre, anecdotes, and radio. 'The publication of *Versuche*', the author begins, 'comes at a point in time when certain projects should no longer be confined to individual experience, but should rather be

directed to the transformation of particular institutes and institutions.' This is not a proclamation of renovation, but a manifesto for rebellion. Here writing no longer depends on the sentiment of an author who has no intention of changing the world and has taken the side of caution. This writing is self-conscious that its only chance is to become a by-product in a very intricate process of change, and this indeed it is. The principal product, however, is a new attitude. Lichtenberg says, 'It is not the content of a person's convictions that is important. What matters is what his convictions make of him.' This is what Brecht calls attitude. It is new, and the newest thing about it is that it can be learned. 'The second experiment, "Herr Keuner's Stories"', says Brecht, 'represents an attempt to make gestures quotable.' But it is not only Herr Keuner's attitude that is quotable. So too, with practice, is the attitude of the school students in *The Ocean Flight*, or that of the egoist Fatzer. And conversely, what is quotable here is not just the attitude, but equally the words that accompany it. The words, too, need to be practised, and therefore noted, if they are later to be understood. They have their educational effect first, then their political effect, and their poetic effect last of all.

In these few words you have all the important themes in Brecht's work, if perhaps in over-condensed form, and we are now entitled to pause for breath and to take a look at Brecht's crowd of characters, singling out the few who best express their author's intentions. First among these I would select Herr Keuner, who only ventures forth in Brecht's most recent work. We need not dwell on the origin of his name, but rather assume with Leon Feuchtwanger, who has worked together with Brecht in the past, that it contains the Greek root κοινός: the general, that which affects everything and pertains to everything. Herr Keuner is indeed 'all affecting' and to 'all-pertaining', i.e. a leader. And yet he is quite different from how a leader is usually imagined to be; in no way an orator or demagogue, a he-man or a go-getter. His principle concern is very far from what today is generally taken as that of a leader. For Herr Keuner is a thinking man. I remember how Brecht on one occasion depicted Herr Keuner's appearance if he should ever be portrayed on the stage. He would be brought on in a litter, for the thinker doesn't put himself out; and he would follow the action on the stage silently, or perhaps not at all. For it is precisely the characteristic of so much of our condition today that the thinking man cannot follow the action at all. His whole deportment would be such that it would be impossible to confuse this thinker with the Greek sage, the strict Stoic or the Epicurean artist of life; he has a closer resemblance to Paul Valéry's character, Monsieur Teste, a man of pure thought devoid of emotional disturbance. Both have certain Chinese features. Both are infinitely cunning, infinitely courteous, infinitely old, and capable of infinite adaptation. But Herr Keuner differs from his French colleague in having a goal, which he does not forget for a single moment. His goal is the new state. A state with as deep a philosophical and literary basis as we find in that of Confucius. To depart from the Chinese analogy, however, we would say that Herr Keuner also exhibits certain Jesuitical features. This is in no way accidental. The more carefully one examines the characters that Brecht has created, the clearer it is how, for all their power and vivacity, they are political

models, almost dummies like those used for studying anatomy. Common to all of them are rational political actions that proceed not from human kindness, love of neighbour, idealism, nobility or similar motives, but simply from their 'attitude'. This attitude may originally be dubious, self-seeking and unsympathetic, but as long as the person affected by it is not taken in, as long as he sticks close to reality, then the corrective is automatic. Not an ethical corrective, for he does not become a better person; but a social corrective, in that his behaviour makes him more useful, or as Brecht puts it on another occasion: 'All vices are good for something, / But not the man who has them.'

Herr Keuner's vice is that of cold and incorruptible rationality. What is this good for? It is good for bringing people to see what assumptions they are building on when they attach themselves to so-called leaders, thinkers or politicians, their books or their speeches. For a whole bundle of assumptions fall apart once the string that binds them together is untied. This string being the firm belief that someone, somewhere, is thinking securely, and we can rely on this. Those individuals who have jobs of this kind, and are even paid for them, think for everyone else; they are trusted to do their job well, and are always busy brushing away remaining doubts and confusions. If anyone should want to deny this, if he were actually able to demonstrate that this is not so, then the public would be quite disturbed. They would then have to start thinking for themselves. Now Herr Keuner's concern is concentrated on showing that the realm of problems and theories, theses and world outlooks is a fictitious one. If they all cancel each other out, then this is neither accidental, nor the result of thought itself, but rather self-serving to those people who appointed the thinkers to their positions. 'But does thinking correspond to certain interests?', the public will now ask. 'Isn't it then disinterested?' Their own thinking is disturbed. 'If thought is in the service of certain interests, who will guarantee that it is in our interest?' And it is at this point that the string is untied, the bundle of assumptions falls apart and is transformed into open questions. Does it pay 'to think?' 'Is it any use?' 'To whom?' 'Crude questions.' But as Herr Keuner says, we have no reason to shy away from crude questions, and save our most refined answers precisely for them. This is how we differ from those others: they know how to ask questions in a refined and subtle way, but the channels of their questions carry them off with the muddy flow of answers toward that unfiltered realm that is profitable only for a few and damaging for almost everyone. We, on the other hand, ask our questions sturdily. But we only accept answers when they have been well sieved. They must be precise and clear, with not only their particular content visible, but also the attitude of the spokesman. This is what Herr Keuner says.

As we have already said, Herr Keuner is the most recent of Brecht's characters. We shall turn quite deliberately now to speak of one of his oldest. You may perhaps remember that I spoke of certain dangers inherent in Brecht's creativity. These dangers affect Herr Keuner, too. Even if he is already the writer's daily guest, he has still to meet other visitors who are very dissimilar to him, and who banish the dangers that he brings the writer. He has to meet Baal, Mack the Knife,

Fatzer, and the whole horde of hooligans and criminals who populate Brecht's plays and are the true singers of his songs, as collected in the astonishing *Hauspostille* (*Domestic Breviary*). This lyrical rowdyism goes back to Brecht's Augsburg period, when he traced out the themes of his later plays in strange melodies and brutal, haunting refrains in the company of his friend and collaborator, Caspar Neher. This is the world of the drunken poet-murderer Baal, and ultimately also of the egoist Fatzer. It would be very wrong, however, to assume that these characters concern the author only as horrifying examples. Brecht's real interest in Baal and Fatzer goes deeper than this. True, he does see them as egoistic and asocial. But it is precisely Brecht's constant endeavour to show the asocial element, the criminal, as a potential revolutionary. It is not just a question of his personal sympathy for this type of person, but also involves a theoretical point. If Marx raised the problem, as it were, of how the revolution is to arise out of something quite alien to it, capitalism, without requiring any ethical dimension; Brecht now translates this problem into the human sphere: he intends the revolutionary to emerge spontaneously from the bad and selfish character, again quite without any special ethical transformation. Just as Wagner hoped to create a homunculus in a test-tube from a magical mixture, so Brecht wants to create a test-tube revolutionary out of baseness and vileness.

As the third character, I shall take Galy Gay, the hero of the comedy *A Man's a Man*. He leaves his house simply to buy a fish for his wife, but meets soldiers from the British Indian Army, who have lost the fourth man in their squad while plundering a pagoda. Their sole interest is in finding a substitute as soon as possible. Galy Gay is a man who can't say no. He follows the three soldiers without knowing their plans for him. Bit by bit he picks up the ideas, attitude, customs, etc., that a man must have in war. He is completely rebuilt, no longer recognizes his wife when she discovers him, and finally becomes a feared warrior and conqueror of the mountain stronghold fortress of Sir el Jowr.

A man's a man is Mister Brecht's contention.
 But that is something anyone might mention.
 Mr. Brecht appends this item to the bill:
 You can do with a human being what you will.
 Take him apart like a car, rebuilt him bit by bit—
 As you will see, he has nothing to lose by it.

The rebuilding spoken of here is explicitly proclaimed by Brecht as a literary form. But what he writes is not a literary work, but a machine, an instrument. It is to be judged by its capacity to transform, dismantle and refashion. Brecht's reading of the great canonical literatures, and Chinese literature above all, has taught him that the highest demand that can be made of a written text is its quotability. This actually lays the ground for a theory of plagiarism, as it simultaneously takes the wind out of the sails of this particular allegation.

Anyone who wanted to define the decisive aim in Brecht in a single phrase, would do well simply to note that his object is poverty.

Poverty, Herr Keuner believes, is a feint that enables us to get closer to reality than any rich man ever can. This is in no way a mystique of poverty, as found in Maeterlinck, neither is it the Franciscan poverty that Rilke had in mind when he wrote that, 'Poverty is a great brilliance from within'. This poverty of Brecht's is rather a kind of uniform, and well suited to give anyone who consciously wears it a high rank. To put it as briefly as possible, it is the physiological and economic poverty of man in the machine age. The state should be rich, but many should be poor; the state should be able to do much, but man should be permitted to do only a little: this is the general human right to poverty as formulated by Brecht and brought to light in its delicate and disconnected appearance.

We shall not draw a conclusion, but simply stop. You can continue these considerations, ladies and gentlemen, with the aid of any good book-store, and even more profoundly without.

Translated by David Fernbach

THE POLITICS OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Jon Halliday

The Struggle for East Asia

Raymond Williams

The Rebirth of Unilateralism?

Mike Davis

The Legacy of the CIO

Isaac Deutscher

22nd June 1941

K.S. Karol

The Tragedy of the Althussers

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>Jon Halliday</i> | Capitalism and Socialism in East Asia |
| 25 | <i>Raymond Williams</i> | The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament |
| 43 | <i>Mike Davis</i> | The Barren Marriage of American Labour and the Democratic Party |
| 85 | | MEMORIES FOR THE FUTURE Presentation of Deutscher |
| 86 | <i>Isaac Deutscher</i> | 22 June 1941 |
| 93 | <i>K. S. Karol</i> | The Tragedy of the Althussers |

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10
29/1/81
p. 28

themes

The events of the last year, culminating in the election of Ronald Reagan, threaten a return to the worst period of the Cold War. The Thatcher government is eagerly participating in the nuclear arms race and urging a more aggressive stance towards the Soviet Union and the insurgent nationalism of parts of the Third World. In reaction there has been a dramatic rebirth of the movement for nuclear disarmament, with the largest demonstrations on this issue since the early sixties and a new commitment by the Labour Party to a non-nuclear defence policy. In NLR 121 Edward Thompson contributed an indictment of the perilous military doctrines of counter-force and 'theatre' nuclear weapons. He discerned in them a logic of 'exterminism' underlying the confrontation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In this issue Raymond Williams takes up the argument and seeks to identify those forces in both West and East, North and South, which might be drawn into a campaign against the dangers of nuclear war. He warns against the temptation to portray all the conflicts arising from rival social systems and rival social forces as possessed of an equivalent, technologically determined logic of global destruction. He shows how this obscures the real possibilities for setting in motion a counter-logic of nuclear disarmament, embracing both unilateral initiatives and multilateral negotiation. He also argues that the real dangers that arise from the proliferation of nuclear weaponry at the periphery of the capitalist world should not be neglected. Williams' article represents, then, a valuable discussion of the role which socialists must play in the new international campaign for nuclear disarmament.

Jon Halliday's text attempts to draw together some of the main strands of the complex and rapidly changing situation in East Asia. While world attention is still riveted on the Middle East, Halliday argues that it is actually East Asia which continues to be the locus for the main shifts in the global struggle between capitalism and socialism. A new regional order is emerging in the wake of China's reorientation to the world market and the reactionary crusade of the US, the PRC and the ASEAN bloc against Vietnam. The cornerstone of the new order will remain, however, the internal stability of the capitalist regimes of what Halliday terms the 'Inner Arc'. He shows how the South Korean and Taiwanese economic 'miracles' of the last decades were compounded out of a singular set of historical ingredients: hypermilitarization, ultra-dependency, and massive US aid combined with popular anticommunism and the profound cultural-

political isolation of their proletariats. But as the recent worker-student insurrection in the South Korean city of Kwangju so dramatically signalled, the hitherto ignored working classes of the East Asian periphery may yet disrupt capitalism's ambitious plans for the Pacific Rim.

The 1930s and 1940s were the watershed in the formation of the US working class. After more than a half century of brutally defeated attempts to unionize the industrial working class, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) succeeded between 1936 and 1946 in organizing millions of workers in America's mass production industries. In a sequel to his analysis of the failure of US labour politics in the 19th and early 20th centuries (NLR 123), Mike Davis examines why this unprecedented upsurge of the economic class struggle—including the most massive strike waves in the history of capitalism—was unaccompanied by any comparable political crisis of US capitalism. At the same time he explores the 'peculiar bond' forged in the 1930s between the Democratic Party and the new industrial unions, arguing that the inability of the CIO to transform the party of Roosevelt and Truman in a social-democratic direction depoliticized much of the American working class as well as leading to a fatal withdrawal of support from the black liberation movement.

As the new independent Polish trade unions attempt to consolidate the remarkable achievements of their long summer of militancy, the reaction of the uneasy Soviet leadership remains problematic. The article by Isaac Deutscher—the earliest of his texts so far translated into English—recalls the earlier, bitter history of Soviet-Polish relations in the era of Stalin. While eloquently attempting to rally exile Polish socialists to the defence of the Soviet Union at its hour of greatest danger, Deutscher also argues that Stalin's flouting of national sentiments in Eastern Europe and Finland resulted not only in disastrous set-backs to local communist parties, but also failed to strengthen the security of the USSR. There should be no need to emphasize the continuing validity of Deutscher's warnings against bureaucratic interventionism.

Capitalism and Socialism in East Asia

Since 1945 East Asia has been the centre of the world struggle between capitalism and socialism.* On the one hand, five victorious revolutions against capitalism have seized and retained state power in all or a substantial part of a national territory. On the other hand, and contrary to what is sometimes believed on the left, East Asia has also witnessed some of post-war capitalism's most impressive achievements. Several of these successes, both capitalist and socialist, have taken place within the same countries—Korea and China. Moreover, it has been in East Asia, especially Korea and Indochina, that imperialism has mounted its biggest military interventions against revolution since World War II, on a scale unparalleled in the rest of the world. An important dimension of the fight against socialism has been the forcible division of countries where revolution was occurring: Korea, China, Vietnam, and Laos. Two of these countries—Vietnam and Laos—are now re-unified, while two others—Korea and China—remain divided. This article attempts to survey the role of the capitalist parts of these divided countries in the global political economy as well

as analysing the present stage in the reunification of Korea and China, the linkages between the two reunifications, and capitalist attitudes towards continued division or reunification. This is done largely through the eyes of Japan, the pre-eminent Asian capitalist power and the world's second largest economy. Japanese capitalism is in the vanguard in the structuring of new relations between world capitalism and the post-revolutionary societies of East Asia.

The Logic of 'Country Splitting'

During us Congressional hearings on Korea in 1970, Senator Stuart Symington discussed the us strategy of 'country splitting'. *Senator Symington*, 'We go into this country splitting business. First we split Germany. Then we split China. We stay with billions and billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of people in the case of Germany. China we stay with billions of dollars and thousands of people. Then we split Korea, and stay there with billions of dollars and tens of thousands of military . . . Then we split Vietnam . . . Now we split Laos . . . Do you know of any other country we plan to split pretty soon?' *Mr. Porter* (us Ambassador to Seoul), 'No, sir.' *Symington*, 'This has been quite an interesting policy, hasn't it, over the years? . . . Our allies don't do this, nor do our possible enemies. We do it all over the world.'¹

There are two immediately striking features of this strategy. First, with the special exception of Germany, East Asia alone has been the arena of 'country splitting' and civil war. Second, the divided nations of East Asia have been subjected to two different sets of economic and political constraints, partially determined by their differential historical relationships to the consolidation of Japanese capitalism's regional periphery. The two countries most intimately tied to Japanese capitalism—Taiwan and South Korea (ROK)—have experienced a far more important and dynamic insertion into world and regional markets than did the formerly divided nations of Indochina. There are several reasons why Korea and China stand in such a complex and interdependent relationship to the contemporary expansion of Japanese capital. First, Korea and Taiwan, together with Manchuria, were the core of Japan's old overseas empire. Secondly, the post-war reconstruction of Japanese capitalism under American aegis was directly linked to the revolutions and counter-revolutions in China and Korea. Thus Japanese economic restoration was accelerated by the us in reaction to the victories of the Chinese Revolution in 1947–49 and consolidated with the Korean War boom. The Americans sponsored a Japanese trade reorientation

* This is a revised version of a paper originally prepared for the Conference on 'Alternative Development Strategies and the Future of Asia,' organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in New Delhi, 11–17 March 1980. I am grateful to several participants at the conference as well as to Anthony Barnett, Richard Blackburn, and Fred Halliday for their critical comments. Many of the themes in this text will be expanded in my forthcoming Penguin book on capitalism and socialism in East Asia since 1945. © UNITAR and the author.

¹ *Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2d Session, Part 6, Washington D.C. 1970, pp. 1579–82.

based upon an advantageous exchange rate for the yen (which boosted exports) and a new triangular commercial nexus between Japan, Southeast Asia, and the US.² Thirdly, the intimate ties of the pre-war period have continued to provide the basis for the contemporary collaboration of the Japanese, South Korean, and Guomindang elites. Pak Jung Hi, the dictator of Korea from 1961 to 1979, had been an officer in the old Japanese Imperial Army; likewise many leading Japanese politicians, including Kiishi Nobusuke (Prime Minister, 1957-60) and Kodama Yoshio (the key figure in the Lockheed scandal) had extensive pre-war connections to China and Korea. Finally, the Korean and Chinese Revolutions were also used as pretexts for widespread repression against the Japanese left in the later 1940s and early 1950s as well as for the construction of a joint US-Japanese security sphere incorporating the capitalist parts of East Asia.

For these and other reasons, the West divided China through the Taiwan Straits in 1950 and Korea along the 38th Parallel in 1945, a demarcation only slightly modified at the end of the Korean War in 1953. Hong Kong and Macao had already been detached from China in preceding centuries.³ These dividing lines, unlike those in Indochina, have proven stable. Behind these barriers a remarkable capitalist transformation has occurred, creating a series of new social, political and economic structures. These, in turn, have given the Seoul and Taipei regimes a much stronger base than that of the governments of Saigon, Vientiane/Luang Prabang, or Phnom Penh prior to 1975.⁴ Although they remained deeply dependent upon Japan and the United States, Chiang Kai-shek (Taiwan, 1949 to 1975) and Pak Jung Hi (Korea, 1961 to 1979) were not mere puppets of imperialism like Thieu or Lon Nol. The Taiwan and South Korean regimes achieved what the anti-communist governments of Indochina found impossible: they established a real social base through land reform, industrialization, greatly increased export earnings, and correspondingly more efficient systems of political repression. Even the ultra-corrupt Guomindang overhauled and modernized itself in the transition from mainland China to Taiwan in 1949, carrying out land

² I have analyzed this at greater length in *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, New York 1975, pp. 195-203.

³ There is plenty of room for discussion of the actual extent to which Hong Kong has been 'split' from China. As Richard Kraus aptly noted: 'For China as a social system (if not as a political system) Hong Kong functions as a reservation of capitalists. Geographical isolation permits the People's Republic to benefit from bourgeois skills without sustaining the costs of internal capitalist institutions.' ('Withdrawing from the World System: Self-Reliance and Class Structure in China,' in Walter L. Goldfrank (ed.), *The World System of Capitalism: Past and Present*, Beverly Hills 1979, p. 256.) It is one of the theses of this article that the capitalists have broken out of the reservation.

⁴ This is not to claim, of course, that the current regime of Chun Doo Hwan in the ROK is 'popular,' like that of the deceased Pak Jung Hi it is dominated by the military. Nonetheless, as Philippe Pons noted in *Le Monde* (9-9-1980), big industry supports the role of the military. I believe that the left in general has tended to overstate the importance of foreign capital while under-emphasizing the role of indigenous capital in the political development of the respective regimes. *En passant*, one may also note that current debates on the problems of economic dependency and state power in the Third World have tended to neglect the crucial East Asian cases.

reform policies it had stubbornly refused to implement on the mainland.⁵

I. The Specificity of the Amputated Capitalist Territories

In what follows, I shall principally discuss the territories which I have elsewhere⁶ called the 'Inner Arc,' viz., Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Macau. Singapore is also discussed since, as an enclave/exclave transformed by world capitalism, it shares many features with Hong Kong.⁷ There is no entirely satisfactory way of both abbreviating and defining the often overlapping but yet not identical situations of these five territories. Strictly speaking they fall into three groups: (1) Hong Kong and Macau—territories excised from China during the colonial period under unequal treaties, but whose excision is currently tolerated by the Peoples' Republic (PRC); (2) Taiwan and South Korea—territories amputated by external (US) intervention against socialist revolution immediately after World War II, whose removal is not tolerated by these revolutions; and (3) Singapore—a city-state created by secession from non-socialist Malaysia in 1965. Four of these states—Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore—are considered to be 'newly industrializing countries' (NICs); in fact they are *the* Asian NICs.

Despite their many differences, the territories of the Inner Arc nonetheless comprise a sui generis category of dependent social formations. In the first place their political, social, and ideological complexion has been determined by the fact that they are all *sections* of larger nations which were divided (or, in the case of earlier colonial seizures, kept divided) as a response to the threat of revolution. This political fragmentation has, in turn, been reinforced by the extreme sexual segmentation of the workforce and by the presence of special enclave/exclave areas known as Free Trade Zones or Export Free Zones (FTZs or EFZs). Furthermore, the Inner Arc states all lack most 'normal' pre-requisites of nationhood; particularly striking is the absence of any mass acceptance of a claim to national identity within existing state boundaries (although this condition might eventually change, especially

⁵ The counter-revolutionary character and limits of this reform are described by Yu-hai Chen in his 'Rural Transformation in Mainland China and Taiwan: A Comparative Study,' *Social Praxis*, V, 1-2 (1978).

⁶ 'Recession, Revolution and Metropolis—Periphery Relations in East Asia,' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, VII, 3 (1977). The term was adopted to differentiate two groups of territories: (a) those forming parts of divided nations which lie within Japan's 'inner' periphery—Taiwan, ROC, Hong Kong, Macau; and (b) its 'outer' periphery—the five ASEAN countries.

⁷ In any fuller discussion another major factor to be taken into consideration is the role of the Overseas Chinese. In number and economic power they equal Taiwan and have, on the whole, been its most powerful political and economic reserve. The complexity of the role of the Overseas Chinese in the East Asia economy has scarcely been captured in most economic studies or Chinese and Russian political propaganda. Essentially they constitute a major 'offshore economy' with bases within various Southeast Asian countries. Thus Hong Kong, formally a colony of the UK, is in many ways more an economic colony of the Overseas Chinese. For some useful statistics, see Chung-hsun Yu, 'Income and Investment Among Overseas Chinese,' *The Developing Economies* (Tokyo), XIII, 2 (June 1975), pp. 119-36.

in Taiwan). The weak political legitimization of the regimes, however, is compensated for by their unusually high levels of militarization and ideological mobilization against socialism. Taiwan and South Korea are the new Prussias, of Asia, while Singapore and Hong Kong have been notoriously successful in quelling working class discontent.

Repression and Militarization

The exceptional strength of the repressive apparatuses in the states of the Inner Arc must be analyzed in historical context. Korea and Taiwan, for example, both experienced long and efficient Japanese colonial oppression. After 1945 there was no real 'break' or significant democratization involved in the transition from Japanese occupation to the new American-sponsored regimes.⁸ These territories have, therefore, endured unprecedentedly long reigns of unbroken repression against popular organization of any kind: 140 years in the case of Hong Kong; nearly a century in Taiwan and South Korea. Nowhere in the world, except South Africa, can compare with this record. At the same time anti-socialism in the Inner Arc has also acquired an ideological sanction and degree of mass support which has been absent in most other post-colonial states. Because these states have been artificially created or maintained against revolution—with regimes based heavily upon the support of refugees from socialism—there is a real reservoir of hothouse anti-communism which can be mobilized relatively effectively in support of repression. At the same time, the fact that other regimes which claim to be socialist actually exist *within* the same countries makes it *more*, rather than less difficult for the workers and peasants in South Korea and Taiwan to appeal to socialism than would be the case, for example, in Mexico or Brazil. This situation is the product of several factors. The first is that the governments in power in Seoul and Taipei can control a partial and hostile portrait of life within North Korea and the PRC. The second is that the case of socialism presented by Pyongyang and Beijing, even when it has managed to get through to the masses in the ROK and Taiwan, has been far from persuasive or attractive. Finally it is important to emphasize the extraordinary isolation suffered by the proletariats of South Korea and Taiwan. They are far more isolated from international solidarity, contacts, and information than workers in countries like Brazil, Mexico or Nigeria. This is due not only to the efficiency of repression and censorship, but also to a complex of historical causes, language and geography.

Astonishingly high levels of militarization support and maintain the efficiency of the repressive machinery in the Inner Arc. The size of the armed forces in the divided East Asian territories distinguishes them from other third world countries, even ones with overtly military regimes, such as Pakistan or Indonesia (see Table 1). The crucial difference is that Taiwan and South Korea are not merely military regimes, they are militarized societies. The comparison with other

⁸ Aside from the Korean War itself, there were mass uprisings in South Korea in 1946 and 1948, while native Taiwanese rose up against the Guomindang in the bloody insurrection of 1947.

TABLE I
Comparative Militarization

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| State | Population (millions) | Armed Forces | Military Budget (billions) | 3 as % of GNP | 3 as % of Public Expenditure |
| ROK | 37.6 | 619,000-670,000 ⁽¹⁾ | \$3.22 (1979) | 6% | 24-35% ⁽²⁾ |
| Taiwan | 17.5 | 539,000 | \$1.67 (1977-78) | 8% | 26% |
| Pakistan | 80.17 | 429,000 | \$1.05 (1978-79) | 6% | 26% |
| Indonesia | 150.83 | 239,000 | \$1.47 (1979-80) | 3% | 21% |

SOURCE: *Asia Yearbook*, 1980, pp. 49-52, 56, 10; except:

⁽¹⁾ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1980-81*, London 1980, for higher figures.

⁽²⁾ The higher figure from *Le Monde*, 9-9-1980, p. 7.

TABLE 2
US Military Assistance 1946-75
(millions)

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| ROK | \$8,871.8 |
| Taiwan | \$4,410 |
| Latin America | \$2,562 |
| Africa | \$1,030.4 |

SOURCE: NACLA, *Latin America and Empire*
Report, X, 1 (Jan. 1976), pp. 24-26.

regional powers of the third world illustrates this point vividly. These levels of extreme militarization in the ROK and Taiwan—comparable only to Israel or to European nations in wartime conditions—have been subsidized and promoted by the United States, as comparative figures for US military assistance make vividly clear (Table 2). In addition, the US has maintained an unbroken military presence in Korea since 1945 and fought a major war there for three years.⁹ It also had a considerable military installation on Taiwan until 1979. The political apparatuses, economics, and cultures of both states have been profoundly influenced by their role as the forward bases of American imperialism in Asia.

The Politics of Ultra-Dependency

In terms of world trade and development, what really differentiates the Inner Arc nations from the other major industrializing countries is not just their exceptionally high growth rate nor even the extent of their rapid industrialization, but rather the combination with these of the high percentage of their manufacturing output which is exported (Table 3). By 1976 the East Asian NICs accounted for well over 60 per cent of all exports of manufactured goods from the whole of the third world. Between 1963 and 1977 their share of world industrial production rose from 0.35 per cent to 1.35 per cent, but their share of

⁹ See Daniel L. Spencer, 'An External Military Presence, Technological Transfer, and Structural Change,' *Kyukho*, XVIII, 3 (1965).

TABLE 3
Comparative Economic Performance of EA NICs

| Country | 1 Average p.a. real GDP growth | 2 Manufacturing Output (1970 = 100) | 3 % Increase p.a. of 2 | 4 Foreign Trade Turnover as % of GNP | 5 Share of Manufacturers in Exports | 6 Exports as % of Gross Manufacturing Output | 7 % of World Exports of Manufactures (% of World Industrial Production in brackets) ⁽²⁾ |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| Hong Kong | 1963-73 9.0 | 1973 n.a. ⁽⁴⁾ | 1970-78 ⁽¹⁾ n.a. ⁽⁴⁾ | (1976) 183 ⁽¹⁴⁾ | (1975) 97 ⁽⁵⁾ | (1974) ⁽¹¹⁾ 78.3 (1973) 0.76 (0.08) | 1963 1.05 (0.18) 1.15 (0.21) ⁽¹⁴⁾ |
| ROC | 10.3 | 184 | 541 ⁽⁷⁾ 23.8 | 68 | 82 | 37.3 | 0.05 (0.11) 0.78 (0.32) |
| Taiwan | 10.4 | 185 | 263 ⁽⁸⁾ 14.8 ⁽⁹⁾ | 90 | 85 | 28.0 (1971) | 0.16 (0.11) 1.04 (0.34) |
| Singapore | 10.3 | 163 | 226 ⁽⁷⁾ 10.9 | 252 ⁽¹⁴⁾ 7.4 | 43 ⁽⁵⁾ | 77.2 | 0.38 (0.05) 0.46 (0.08) 0.52 (0.0) |
| Four EA NICs (total) | | | | | | | 1.35 (0.35) 3.33 (0.92) 4.10 (1.35) |
| Rest of Third World | | | | | | | 2.92 (10.39) 3.33 (13.05) 2.47 (14.68) |
| of which: | | | | | | | |
| Mexico | 7.1 | 123 | 156 ⁽¹⁰⁾ 6.2 | 14 ⁽¹¹⁾ | 32 ⁽¹¹⁾ | n.a. | 0.17 (1.04) 0.64 (1.30) 0.51 (1.45) |
| Brazil | 8.2 | 146 ⁽¹²⁾ | 211 ⁽¹²⁾ 9.8 ⁽¹²⁾ | 19 | 27 | 4.7 (1973) | 0.05 (1.37) 0.35 (2.10) 0.41 (2.49) ⁽¹⁴⁾ |
| OECD | 4.9 | 120 ⁽¹³⁾ | 129 ⁽¹⁰⁻¹³⁾ 5.3 ⁽¹³⁾ | 1.7 ⁽¹³⁾ | | 80.49 | 82.25 13.35 10.00 9.65 |
| E. Europe | | 129 | 189 8.4 | 7.9 | | | |

SOURCES: Columns 2 and 3 from Anthony Edwards, *The New Industrial Countries and their Impact on Western Manufacturing* (London, Economist Intelligence Unit Special Report No. 73, 1979), p. 9, Table 1.3; all others from OECD, *The Impact of the Newly Industrializing Countries on Production and Trade in Manufactures* (Paris, OECD, 1979) Col. 1 from Table 23, p. 50; cols. 4 and 5 from Table 21, p. 47; Col. 6 from Table 26, p. 52; Col. 7 from Tables 1 and 2, pp. 18, 19.

(1) Excluding food, beverages, tobacco and non-ferrous metals.

(2) Manufactures columns for whole world; industrial production figures exclude the Eastern bloc.

(3) Growth in remaining months of 1978 assumed to be at half the rate of those 1978 months for which data existed.

(4) Hong Kong not included in E.I.U. source 'as it has no adequate index of manufacturing output'.

(5) Including re-exports (approx. 20 per cent of total exports for Hong Kong—J.H.).

(6) Including imports for re-exports.

(7) January–September.

(8) To 1977.

(9) Excluding trade of the free trade border zone.

(10) All industry.

(11) Figures in brackets: 1976.

(12) All Western industrial countries plus Israel.

(13) Figures in brackets: 1976.

(14) Figures in brackets: 1976.

world exports of manufactures increased from 1.35 per cent to 4.10 per cent. Over the same period the share of all the rest of the third world in world manufacturing exports shrank from 2.92 to 2.47 per cent (although their share of industrial production rose from 10.59 to 14.68 per cent). This trend continued and probably became even more marked in the late 1970s as manufacturing production and export volume increased considerably in Taiwan and the ROK. *Fortune's* 1980 list of the top five hundred non-US industrial corporations revealed that ten South Korean firms were now members of this privileged club—far more than any other developing country, and half as many as the rest of the third world put together.¹⁰ These spectacular successes have fed the oft-repeated claim that the ROK and Taiwan were following in the footsteps of Japan and would soon join the ranks of advanced industrial societies.¹¹

The claim is probably premature—partly, at least, because the OECD powers are not at all sure whether a future of '2, 3, many Japans' is the dream of capitalism reproducing itself successfully or the nightmare of competition come true.¹² The East Asian NICs are more *import-oriented* than export-oriented. The high levels of petroleum consumption by the ROK and Taiwan make them especially vulnerable to the oil crisis and balance of payment difficulties.¹³ In 1979, for example, South Korea had a \$5.3 billion trade deficit, with the likelihood that it would be even larger at the end of 1980. Thirdly, whereas Japanese capitalism has grown with a minimum presence of foreign investment, the economies of the Inner Arc are much more dependent on, and subject to manipulation by trans-national capital. Some years ago, when the East Asian NICs accounted for only some one-third of the exports of manufactured goods from the third world, it was suggested that these territories could be used by the OECD powers to thwart, or at least condition, the industrialization programmes of other developing countries.¹⁴ Because the Inner Arc states were formed or maintained by external intervention against revolution, they

¹⁰ *Fortune*, August 11, 1980.

¹¹ On the ROK see Nobuyuki Yamamura, 'Asia's New Economic Giant in the 1980's,' *The World Economy*, II, 1 (January 1979).

¹² This is not the place to enter the debate about the controversial theses on Third World industrialization expounded by the late Bill Warren in *NLA* 81 (and now extended in his *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, NLB, London 1980). However, one fact which emerges from consideration of the EA NICs is that their very disproportionate contribution to overall Third World totals skews any generalization beyond the point of utility.

¹³ *Far East Economic Review* (henceforward *FEER*), 8 August 1980, p. 42.

¹⁴ This 'blackleg' proposal was made by US Treasury Secretary William Simon in 1976 (see *FEER*, 16 January 1976). The advantage of Korean labour is not simply low wages, but more importantly the tight control over Korean workers in the Middle East by the Korean CIA. As for the larger economic deployment of the Inner Arc against the rest of the Third World, it is above all a question of the conjunctural preemption of possible markets. Only a restricted number of developing countries can achieve a significant world market share at any given stage. The Inner Arc has monopolized a decisive proportion of the world 'quota' in the current phase. The privileged position of South Korea in terms of world capital is shown by the fact that per capita, the ROK is the biggest recipient of loans among the major NICs with over \$20 billion by mid-1980 for a population of 38 million. Cf. Brazil with \$55 billion for a population of 115 million or Mexico with \$26.5 billion for a population of 68 million.

(unlike Singapore) cannot gain full membership in the UN or join the political organizations of the Third World, such as the Non-Aligned Group. This isolation has nurtured a situation of 'ultra-dependency' which makes them politically available for world capitalism not only as bulwarks in the containment of communism, but also as a blackleg force against the rest of the Third World as well as the working class of the metropolitan countries. Yet, as noted earlier, the ultra-dependency of these states does not mean that they are mere puppets of the us or Japan. The political, military, and economic power which they wield gives them a real leverage which Thieu and Lon Nol never possessed.

Finally, East Asia is the part of the Third World where the two crucial components of capitalism—finance and manufacturing—have flourished together. The banking systems in the two city-states, Hong Kong and Singapore, are far more important on both a regional and world scale than any others in the Third World. They afford invaluable bases for different configurations of 'off-shore' finance capital: Hong Kong for British, American, PRC and Overseas Chinese capital; Singapore primarily for American and Overseas Chinese money. Unlike the Caribbean financial havens, however, they are also closely linked to the major manufacturing centres in the region. Singapore houses the Asian dollar market while Hong Kong is a major world power in finance.¹⁵

II. Japan and the Inner Arc

Building on its historic ties and the legacy of its colonial empire, Japan has gone on since 1945 to build new spheres of influence and collaboration with the states of the Inner Arc. Just as Japan's restoration and re-insertion into the world economy were precipitated by the fight against socialism, so South Korea and Taiwan were reshaped not only to 'contain' the Korean and Chinese revolutions, but also as Japan's periphery. This is true, first of all, in military affairs. Japan's relatively low level of post-war military spending—and the unique fiscal exemption which this has provided Japanese capital—has been possible because of the hyper-militarization of its periphery (plus the presence of sizeable us forces).¹⁶ Secondly, Japan has gained enormous economic advantage from the structural position of the so-called 'export-oriented' Inner Arc economies as being, in fact, heavily import-dependent. Not only is Japan's trade with these territories large and growing, but it is especially favourable to Japan. Between 1970 and 1976, Japan's exports to the ROK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore tripled. Conversely, in the same period, the same four states' combined

¹⁵ Cf. FEHR, 6 April 1979; Zoran Hodjera, 'The Asian Currency Market: Singapore as a Regional Financial Center,' *IMF Staff Papers*, XXV, 2 (June 1978); *Economist*, 23 June 1979, p. 26; I have tried to outline the Hong Kong situation in 'Hong Kong: Britain's Chinese Colony,' *NLR* 87/88.

¹⁶ While Japan's military budget is the seventh largest in the world (*Guardian*, 6 February 1980), its arms spending only constitutes 1.5 per cent of its GNP (*Economist*, 28 July 1979). A brilliant conceptualization of this relationship is offered by Sakamoto Yoshikazu, 'Japan's role in World Politics,' *Japan Quarterly* (Tokyo), XXVII, 2 (1980).

deficit with Japan exceeded their total exports to Japan—in fact was greater than Japan's total exports to the whole of East and Southeast Asia in 1970.¹⁷ In 1977 Japan's surplus with Taiwan was \$1.5 billion; two years later its surpluses with South Korea and Hong Kong were estimated to be \$3.5 billion each. In more global terms, Japan in 1977 accounted for well over half of the large OECD surplus in trade in manufactures with the NICs (\$10.63 of \$18.16 billion), while its relative share in the same surplus had increased 138.1 per cent since 1973.¹⁸ Finally, it should be noted that Japan's trade with the post-revolutionary societies of East Asia, while not yet as important as that with its capitalist periphery, has also begun to produce bonanza surpluses. The 1978 surplus with the PRC was exactly \$1 billion, while trade with the DPRK (North Korea) has been running at between 2:1 and 3:2 in Japan's favour.¹⁹

Thus the sheer magnitude of Japan's trade with the Inner Arc points to its exceptional importance, but what of its structural forms and political linkages? Japan's relations with its periphery have been a murky area of corruption, fudged statistics, and official cover-ups which make it impossible to put any precise 'value' on the maintenance of the status quo for the present Japanese regime. Nonetheless, there are some important points which need to be fed into any overall equation:

(1) The Japanese system of financing has traditionally been more by credit than by direct investment, so any bare criterion of direct foreign investment (DFI) is particularly inadequate for assessing the Japanese stake in Taiwan or the ROK.

(2) The role of the giant Japanese trading companies (*sōgō shōsha*) has been pivotal. The *shōsha* control a very high percentage of the foreign trade, as well as a considerable proportion of the domestic trade, of both Taiwan and the ROK: probably 50% of Taiwan's exports and 40–45% of its imports;²⁰ the figures for the ROK are probably slightly higher since more of its total trade involves Japan. Equally important, but in a different way, is the function of the *shōsha* as a kind of umbrella for overseas economic activity, including investment, by small and medium-size Japanese firms which, at least until the recent recession, accounted for the bulk of Japan's overseas DFI (quite unlike any other OECD nation). Many of these firms went abroad to reconstitute their profit margins and the 'cover' from the *shōsha* has thus had important economic, social, and political implications at home. There are also, of course, powerful fractions of the big bourgeoisie in Japan closely tied to the regimes in Seoul and Taipei. On the other hand, there are,

¹⁷ FEER, 28 February 1978.

¹⁸ OECD, *The Impact of the Newly Industrialising Countries on Production and Trade in Manufactures*, Paris 1979, Table 10, p. 29 (Cf. Table 11, p. 30).

¹⁹ *North Korea Quarterly* (Hamburg), VI, 2, p. 17.

²⁰ Max Eli, with H. Laumer and T. Shimizu, *Sōgō Shōsha: Strukturen und Strategien japanischer Welthandelsunternehmen*, Düsseldorf 1977, p. 403; also, Kikuni Ryūzuke, 'Shōsha: Organizers of the World Economy,' *The Japan Interpreter* (Tokyo), VIII, 3 (Autumn 1973); Yoshi Tsunomi, *The Japanese Are Coming: A Multinational Interaction of Firms and Politics*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1976; and Terutomo Ozawa, *Multinationalism Japanese Style: The Political Economy of Outward Dependency*, Princeton 1979.

as yet, no important fractions of the Japanese bourgeoisie with comparably strong ties to Beijing, much less Pyongyang.²¹

(3) Japan has used its periphery to dump some dangerous and high-pollutant industries, especially in Korea. Many sources have also suggested that Japan has also located some of its military and arms-related production in the periphery to circumvent domestic opposition to rearmament.

(4) Japan exploits its periphery as a labour market in a different way from the other main OECD countries. Japan is the only major advanced industrial country which did not import foreign workers during the 1960s and early 1970s booms. Instead it exported its marginal or threatened industries to its lower wage periphery.

Altogether, therefore, its capitalist periphery has been of inestimable importance to post-war Japan, not only because of the size of the markets involved, but also because of the structural integration with the metropolis, the long-term trade imbalance, and the dependence of many smaller Japanese firms (aggregated through the *keiretsu*) upon the periphery for maintaining profit margins. In some respects it is fair to consider Taiwan and South Korea as extensions of the Japanese domestic market.

Japan and the Growth Recession

Although the 1973-75 recession forced a slow-down in Japan's growth, it has still managed to stay ahead of its main competitors. Japan's GNP now surpasses that of the USSR,²² while its per capita GNP is roughly equal to that of the US (depending on fluctuating exchange rates) and about 15 per cent higher than that of the EEC. Real GDP growth over the decade 1970-79 was 6 per cent per annum, nearly double the OECD average of 3.4 per cent and that of its chief competitor, West Germany (3.2 per cent).²³ Furthermore, Japan is still much more agile than the other leading OECD countries at industrial reconversion and is also ahead in several key areas of technology.²⁴ In addition, Japan enjoyed for a time a very large current account surplus (\$25 billion in 1978) that was greater than that of all the OPEC countries combined. On the other hand, Japan has also suffered from what business likes to call a 'structural recession' (that is, surplus capacity) in certain traditionally strategic sectors, particularly steel,

²¹ In August 1980 Japanese big business organized its first formal body for trade with the DPRK, the East Asia Trade Research Bureau. Its chairman was no less a personage than Mizukami Tatsuho, the Chairman of the Japan Foreign Trade Council, while another key instigator was Inayama Yoshihiro, President of Japan's big business confederation (Keidanren). See the *Japan Economic Journal*, 12 August 1980.

²² *International Herald Tribune*, 31 March 1980.

²³ *Economist*, 29 December 1979.

²⁴ On Japan's reconversion, see the surveys in the *Financial Times*, 5 June 1979; *FRER*, 14 December 1979 and 29 August 1980; *Economist*, 23 February 1980; *Business Week*, 30 June 1980 (special issue on the 're-industrialization' of the US with comparisons with Japan). On Japan's potential lead in several important fields of military technology, see the five-part series by Clarence Robinson in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 14 January-11 February 1980.

shipbuilding and textiles. With the concomitant fall in domestic investment and the tendency toward a trade surplus, this has produced increasing pressures to find new markets and to export part of the 'surplus' capital. This trend has also been reinforced by the government's desire to protect the domestic capital market which, because of the role of artificial interest rates in domestic accumulation, has been the key to the ruling class's control over growth.²⁵

Japan is, in general terms, well positioned to take advantage of the next phase of economic development in East Asia. As seen earlier, the entire region basically has operated on financing through loans rather than DFI. The use of loans has given Japanese capital greater mobility and, on the whole, higher returns. The flexibility of this system was demonstrated after the liberation of South Vietnam in 1975: total Japanese direct investment was a paltry \$4 million so Tokyo could switch with relative ease towards financial accommodation with the new government of united Vietnam.²⁶ Now, however, the structural constraints of the Japanese economy are increasingly forcing the big Japanese firms into more DFI schemes and aggressive overseas financial operations in general. Furthermore, after the vicissitudes of Mitsui's gigantic petrochemical complex in Iran, the risks of direct investment are bound to pressure Tokyo to demand tougher guarantees from host countries as well as closer cooperation and joint ventures with the Japanese private sector.²⁷

III. Non-Capitalist East Asia

China: The New Open Door?

In October 1977 *Fortune* published a chart entitled the 'Asian Investability Index,' giving ratings for labour conditions, wages, human rights, and so on. It listed every territory in East Asia except for North Korea, but including the PRC and Kampuchea. The message about both the PRC and Kampuchea (then under Pol Pot) was: things don't look so good for us capital at the moment, but don't give up hope, the times may change. Well, they have changed, and Beijing has joined the US, NATO, and Japan in a *de facto* alliance which is not merely 'anti-Moscow,' but increasing directed against revolution and anti-capitalist change tout court.²⁸ The parallel US-China and Japan-China

²⁵ This is, perhaps, the single most important particularity of the Japanese economy, and is especially far-reaching because of the vertiginous increase in deficit financing. See *Business Week*, 26 February 1979; and *Economist*, 1 September 1979.

²⁶ Even the US has tended to follow suit and adopt rapid turn-over lending as an alternative to DFI in East Asia. Although the region is the US's leading trading partner, it receives less than 5 per cent of US worldwide DFI.

²⁷ See Sasao Hideshi, 'Japanese Industries: Recession and Beyond,' *AMPO* VII, 4 (October-December 1975).

²⁸ *Newsweek*, 21 April 1980, cites Michael Pillsbury, a national security adviser to the US Senate, as saying: 'The possibility of joint American-Chinese action in Asia would take a great deal of weight off NATO's shoulders. . . . It would be useful to the US to be told by the Chinese who's who in revolutionary movements overseas. American officials find it difficult to be sensitive to differences among revolutionary leaders. This is China's business and it could guide us. . . . For example, Angola might have been less of a fiasco for America if we had conferred with the Chinese. Situations like Angola will become even more frequent in the 1980s.'

rapprochements have also stirred many greedy visions in corporate boardrooms of a new 'open door' to the most populous nation on earth, with hopes that the reintegration of the PRC into the world market might help cope with the ills of capitalist recession.²⁹ In essence it has been argued that because China is likely to be a much bigger market for both goods and capital than an exporter for the rest of the century, and since it provides the world capitalist economy with the largest single expansion of its labour market and industrial reserve army in history, China can act both as a stimulus and as a stabilizer to the recession-hit system. What are the real likelihoods?

First, as regards trade, if the current modernization programme goes ahead, China's imports should grow faster than its exports, and its foreign trade should expand twice as fast as the economy as a whole.³⁰ At the same time, according to the revised plans, even by the turn of the century the PRC should still not be a serious export competitor for the major established powers. For Japan, in particular, one of the most appealing features of the current Chinese plan is that it calls for large imports of goods from the very sectors of the Japanese economy which are suffering from over-production. In 1977, for example, 55% of the PRC's imports from Japan consisted of iron and steel.³¹ Even the large Chinese steel projects on which Japan is providing assistance do not threaten Japan's own steel industry since they will not produce the same kind of high technology steel in which Japanese producers have specialized. Moreover the very ambitious and extensive infrastructure outlays of the Chinese plan (ports, railways, bridges, and so on) promise to maintain a large demand for Japanese exports.

Secondly, there is the question of credit. China is what financiers call an 'under-banked' country. In late 1979 it was estimated by apparently well-informed Western sources that the PRC at that time took up approximately one-seventh of government credits available worldwide and 10 to 15 per cent of the Eurocurrency market.³² In February 1980 the Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Commission stated that China would borrow more than \$20 billion on the international capital markets by 1985.³³

Western bankers fell over themselves trying to lend money to Chinese borrowers. China, in fact, established lines of credit estimated to total \$28 billion between December 1978 and September 1980 (\$26 billion

²⁹ Cf. Malcolm Caldwell, 'What China's New Policy Could Mean for World Capitalism,' *Tribune* (London), 1 December 1978; and Greg O'Leary, 'China Comes Home: The Re-Integration of China into the World Economy,' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, IX, 4 (1979).

³⁰ Useful information, comparing different estimates of the PRC's foreign trade, is contained in W. Klatt, 'China's New Economic Policy: A Statistical Appraisal,' *China Quarterly*, 80 (December 1979), pp. 724ff. The most up-to-date material available on revised modernization plans is the report by the Minister of Finance, Wang Bingqian, in *Beijing Review*, 39 (29 September 1980).

³¹ Shiranishi Shin'ichiro, 'The Potential for Economic Cooperation,' *Japan Quarterly*, XXVI, 1 (January-March 1979), p. 42.

³² *Financial Times*, 29 November 1979.

³³ *Times*, 8 February 1980.

in 1979 alone), but then—to the consternation of banking circles—decided not to avail itself of most of this potential lending.³⁴ Total foreign debt, it was officially announced in September 1980, would be only \$3.4 billion at the end of 1980 after payments on principal and interest totaling \$1.48 billion.³⁵

Thirdly, China has also begun to integrate with the world labour market in two crucial ways. On the one hand it is allowing foreign investment again and has even set up Free Trade Zones and special industrial zones with rather liberal concessions on profits.³⁶ What is most striking about this change in policy is not so much that China has allowed foreign capital to return, but that it seems to have gone overboard in doing so, without vetting much of the new foreign production from any recognizable criteria of socialist priorities (as in the decision to allow Chinese labour to produce Western luxury goods). Moreover, the conditions under which national and regional authorities in the PRC are willing to sell the Chinese proletariat to Western capital seem hardly advantageous to the former. In a recent interview, the Deputy Governor of Fujian Province (one of the two special designated provinces) said that China was carefully studying wage rates in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the ROC, and that he was sure the Fujian rates would be even lower.³⁷ Of course China's proposed low wages only partly counter-balance major drawbacks in its position as a new platform for multi-national production. To begin with, much of the industrial plant is extremely backward and old-fashioned by world market standards. In addition, there are pervasive problems of poor work discipline, low quality workmanship, and even corruption. As the *Times Business Diary* recently noted after a visit to the PRC side of the PRC-Hong Kong border area, some of this undoubtedly expresses proletarian dissatisfaction with the PRC's 'decision to sell their labour to foreign capitalists. One businessman in Hong Kong put it this way, 'People here work like hell but they work for the dollar bill under their noses. Over the border the attitude is "Why should I work hard for the foreign devil when I still get paid the same?"'³⁸

The other form of integration with the world labour market is no more of a contribution to proletarian internationalism than the first. China has put itself forward as a source of cheap labour for the projects of foreign capital outside China. The biggest such deal yet reported was the agreement with a subsidiary of the Italian state holding company, IRI, to export up to 400,000 Chinese workers to various LDCs.³⁹ The implications are troubling. For reasons that are partly under-

³⁴ *Wall Street Journal*, 10 September 1980.

³⁵ Report by Wang, *Beijing Review*, 29 September 1980, p. 18.

³⁶ Corporate profit taxes at Shekou Industrial Zone adjacent to Hong Kong were described as the 'lowest in Asia'. (*Monsoon* (Hong Kong), March 1980, p. 19).

³⁷ *FEER*, 18 January 1980, p. 52.

³⁸ *Times*, 29 July 1980. Hong Kong managers complain bitterly about the poor work discipline amongst recent immigrants from the PRC.

³⁹ *Le Monde*, 6 August 1979. While this report was subsequently denied by a Chinese source, *FEER* (30 November 1979) carried details of a PRC offer to export workers via a Hong Kong firm, and *Newweek* (15 September 1980) claimed that the PRC has signed more than forty contracts worth about \$100 million in the past year, adding that it 'has a force of one million exportable labourers'.

standable, the PRC is now competing with the capitalist states of the Inner Arc on the same terrain with similar methods. If 'Red Fitz' like Fujian can undercut the oppressed workers of South Korea close to home, the export of armies of Chinese labourers can presumably undercut both Korean CIA-controlled migrant workers in the Middle East and the Third World proletariat in general.⁴⁰

Why has China suddenly decided to enter the grim competition between the super-exploited proletariats of the Third World on the terms of the global capitalist market? Although the search for new sources of foreign exchange to help finance its ambitious infrastructural and industrial investment programmes is obviously a major motivation, Beijing also has to contend with a major problem of internal social control: the skyrocketing unemployment in its urban centres. Joblessness has reached ominously high levels, officially acknowledged to be at least ten million out of an urban labour force of one hundred million, and probably twice as high in actuality.⁴¹ Given its internal problems, world capitalism now hopes that the PRC, once considered a major destabilizing force, will henceforth become a decidedly stabilizing factor in the international economy. Moreover, it is remarkable what a relatively low degree of control China appears to be exercising over the whole process of its re-insertion into the world market. To evoke an historical analogy, the PRC certainly appears to operate with less freedom of manoeuvre than did Meiji Japan in a roughly similar process a century before. Furthermore, the kind of information which the OECD countries are acquiring on every aspect of China's economy and investment plans, including even its military planning, provides them with great advantages. Through their satellite tracking stations, 'risk assessment studies', and computer modeling, they can carefully plan their own industrial reconversions and adjustments to accommodate the PRC's new presence in the world economy. Thus the OECD giants and the Inner Arc states can plan to stay ahead on the competitive escalator of the world economy.

What About North Korea?

Although the DPRK is in a diplomatic alliance with the PRC, it has a very different view of the current world situation. From the standpoint of the West, Pyongyang is the missing link in the general East Asian realignment, and thus there is a campaign not simply to increase the volume of its trade with the world market, but also to stimulate new and more intimate structural linkages. With a population of almost 18 million in 1980, the DPRK is obviously a much smaller target than the PRC, but at the same time it has a far more advanced economy, large deposits of strategic minerals, and a ratio of foreign trade to GNP which is triple that of China's (roughly 15 per cent compared to the PRC's 5 per cent). During the period in the early 1970s when the DPRK went on a buying spree in the West, purchasing advanced equipment

⁴⁰ See 'Is China Exporting Labour?', *Beijing Review*, 27 October 1980.

⁴¹ *Economist*, 29 December 1979. FEHR (26 September 1980) gives a figure of '20 million or so unemployed young people,' which appears to have been corroborated by Vice-Premier Li Xian-nian at a closed meeting in mid-1979 (see *International Herald Tribune*, 15 June 1979).

and technologies, its industrial imports were almost half as large as China's (\$253 million versus \$592 million in 1974—or twenty-five times greater in per capita terms).⁴² As a result of this massive import boom, the DPRK went seriously into debt with the West as well as with the USSR and the PRC. But it reacted quite differently from other Third World countries which had also contracted heavy debts in the same period. When Japan and other creditors escalated the pressure on Pyongyang in 1974–7 to meet its debt payments, the North Koreans moved swiftly to cut their trade with the OECD. Although Pyongyang eventually defaulted on some of its outstanding debts, it (unlike Zaire and Jamaica) refused to allow the IMF to examine its books, to devalue its currency, or reduce domestic social spending. Confronted with the DPRK's defiance, the foreign banks were ultimately forced to roll over the loans. Although North Korea's credit rating was badly damaged, it has apparently managed to maintain healthy domestic growth rates through the recession.⁴³ When conditions improved, Pyongyang re-stimulated foreign trade and apparently brought it back into balance by 1978.⁴⁴

In the long run it does not seem as if the DPRK's confrontation with the Western banking establishment will fatally impair its closer integration with the international economy. Certainly from the standpoint of the OECD bloc the economic attractions of trade with the DPRK as well as the strategic importance of bringing it within the structure of the East Asian rapprochement dictate continued overtures and commercial contacts. And from Pyongyang's standpoint increased linkages with the West seem equally necessary for economic reasons. A major reorientation of the DPRK's international trade occurred between 1971 and 1974 as commerce with the Communist states fell from 82 per cent to 38.1 per cent while the share of the West rose spectacularly from 18 per cent to 61.9 per cent.⁴⁵ This reflects the fact that the DPRK, with a relatively advanced economy on a comparable technological plane with the USSR in many industries, can obtain the advanced technology which it increasingly requires only from the West. Thus

⁴² Chong-Sik Lee, 'New Paths for North Korea,' *Problems of Communism*, XXVI, 2 (March–April 1977), p. 57.

⁴³ (us) Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *Korea: The Economic Race Between the North and the South* (1978), p. 2, estimates that the DPRK maintained 14 per cent annual industrial growth in the 1965–76 period. The same study also claims that the South overtook the North in per capita output by 1976. On the other hand, other US government information (cited in Stuart Johnson, *The Military Equation in Northeast Asia*, Washington 1979, p. 63) contradicts this claim and shows the DPRK preserving a small lead over the ROK. At any event, the CIA figures for output of basic goods strongly support the conclusion that the North was still well ahead of the South in real per capita terms through 1976.

⁴⁴ I have attempted a detailed examination of DPRK foreign trade and borrowing in 'The North Korean Model: Gaps and Questions,' in Albrecht Lein (ed.), *Tradition and Change in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—Papers of the Second International Symposium on the DPRK*, Saarbrücken (forthcoming) 1981.

⁴⁵ Youn-Soo Kim, 'The Foreign Trade of the DPRK—Structure and Development', 'The Foreign Trade of the DPRK—Structure and Development', in Youn-Soo Kim (ed.), *The Economy of the Korean Democratic People's Republic 1945–1977: Economic Policy and Foreign Trade Relations with Europe*, Kiel 1979, p. 122. These totals exclude trade with the PRC about which neither partner publishes statistics, but which could account for as much as 20 per cent of DPRK trade.

in his 1979 New Year's speech, President Kim Il Sung stated that 'precedence' would henceforth be given to the production of export goods in all sectors of the economy. This marked a dramatic departure for a regime which has enshrined self-reliance (*juche*) as the guiding principle of its national life.⁴⁶ While this reorientation may be partly conjunctural (the need to raise hard currency to pay off debts), it unquestionably signals a deeper, structural transition in the economy: that it cannot maintain its present rates of growth at high technological levels without increasing its linkages with the West.

The Two Unfinished Reunifications

How has the increasing integration of the PRC and the new situation of the DPRK affected the prospects for the eventual reunifications of China and Korea? In the first place it must be recognized that the USSR no longer champions Chinese and Korean reunification with the same ardour as it once did. Faced with the encirclement of the US-Japan-PRC alliance, Moscow sees Korea as the missing link in the new geo-political calculus of East Asia and would certainly oppose a unified Korea which had an anti-Soviet orientation.⁴⁷ Secondly, it is clear that Beijing and Pyongyang have far from symmetrical positions on reunification. While the PRC absolutely dwarfs Taiwan and has achieved almost universal recognition of its position on reunification, the DPRK, with a population only half that of the ROK, enjoys far less international support than the PRC. The DPRK is far more dependant upon China than vice versa and has in recent years been disadvantaged by Beijing's changing positions. China, naturally, gives priority to its own reunification. Just before the formal announcement of the US-PRC normalization, then Vice-Premier Deng gave a revealing interview to US columnists Evans and Novak in which he discussed and implicitly linked the two reunifications.⁴⁸ The implication of what Deng said was: (a) after reunification Taiwan could remain a capitalist society with its own social system, armed forces, foreign trade, and 'free travel'; (b) the reunifications of China and Korea were closely linked; and (c) the DPRK should recognize the autonomy of the ROK. The disturbing implication in Deng's proposal

⁴⁶ Contrary to some interpretations, the DPRK has never claimed that 'self-reliance' was identical with 'self-sufficiency' (an impossible goal anyway); *juche* means autarchy—national control of politics, economics, military affairs, and culture—not autarky. In fact, oil is the only key strategic material which the DPRK lacks and, according to the US CIA (*Korea: The Economic Race*), it has built the least oil-dependent economy in the world despite its very high per capita level of energy consumption, with oil accounting for only 5 per cent of primary energy consumption in 1976. This is a truly remarkable figure for an industrialized economy, particularly when the corresponding figure for the ROK in 1976 was 63 per cent. For a recent survey of the DPRK's oil situation, see *North Korea Quarterly*, VI, 3/4 (1980), pp. 27–28.

⁴⁷ In mid-1980, as the USSR began to issue studied warnings about the acceleration of Japanese re-militarization, it also wrote—for the first time to my knowledge—of plans for a PRC alliance with not only Washington and Tokyo, but also Seoul (*New Times*, no. 27 (July 1980), p. 21). A little later, *Newsweek* (22 September 1980) reported that the PRC had broken off informal contacts with the ROK, apparently after vehement protests from Pyongyang.

⁴⁸ *Washington Post*, 4 December 1978.

is that the ROK, because of its superior population and powerful allies, might 'swamp' the DPRK.⁴⁹ Furthermore there is a point which Deng did not make explicitly, but which must worry the leaderships in both Beijing and Pyongyang: the linkage between the two reunifications could be negative rather than positive. In other words, the reunification of one country would probably no longer promote the reunification of the other.⁵⁰

IV. Conclusions: What is United and What is Divided?

Many old myths and clichés have been, or need to be, jettisoned. This is not so much an epoch of capitalism riven by increasing contradictions and socialism marching triumphantly ahead, as one of world capitalism relatively united while post-revolutionary societies are divided and battle one another. The prospect of war between the major capitalist powers seems almost absurdly remote these days while fratricide between leading post-revolutionary states is all too appalling a reality. Moreover, capitalism has a commanding lead over the socialist bloc in most key fields of advanced technology, and despite the recession, the leading OECD countries remain in an overwhelmingly strong position vis-à-vis both the fastest growing Third World capitalist states like the ROK and the fastest growing post-revolutionary states like North Korea. The relative unattractiveness of Comecon as an alternative has been illustrated by the fact that both the PRC and Vietnam, as well as the DPRK, recently put forward economic strategies which clearly indicated that they felt that the world capitalist economy held advantages which Comecon did not.⁵¹ It is the dominant capitalist powers which have, so to speak, made the best of both worlds: the US and Japan reap far greater economic advantages from the PRC than the USSR does from Taiwan or Hong Kong. With the exception of the PRC's special relationship with the colonial concessions (Hong Kong and Macau), the leading post-revolutionary states are virtually excluded from the East Asian capitalist periphery, while the converse is not true (except for the case of the US's self-exclusion from trade and relations with the DPRK). In the case of China, in particular, the US has not only penetrated the PRC market and normalized diplomatic relations but it has done so while retaining its strong economic ties with Taiwan. The crucial concession in the December 1978 US-PRC normaliz-

⁴⁹ It was shortly after the PRC-US normalization that the DPRK for the first time publicly offered 'Deng-ist' guarantees concerning the situation in the ROK after reunification. Speaking to Western reporters at the time of the world table tennis championships in Pyongyang, Kim Yong Nam, a very senior DPRK figure, stated that 'the interests of the United States and other countries which are now in South Korea will not be damaged or suffer after reunification.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 11 May 1979.)

⁵⁰ This factor of 'negative linkage' is also relevant in analyzing China's attitude toward the order in which Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau might be reunited with the PRC. It seems to be the attitude of Beijing, that the liberation of Hong Kong from British colonialism might imperil the re-integration of Taiwan.

⁵¹ See particularly the debate around Vietnam's foreign investment law in April 1977. (Full text of law in *La Courrier du Vietnam*, no. 62, July 1977.)

ation agreement was the us's 'right' to continue to re-arm Taiwan.⁵² The overall situation can be resumed as follows: The PRC is far more important than Taiwan and Hong Kong, and South Korea is much more important than North Korea. Given the current attitudes in Beijing, the situation would thus appear highly advantageous to the dominant capitalist powers. What, therefore, are the current attitudes of the us and Japan to the unfinished reunifications? They must, of course, reckon with the internal and autonomous drive for reunification in both China and Korea. In both cases, this trend would seem to be strongest amongst the population in the non-capitalist part of the nations; three decades of division have been used to build strong internal barriers to reunification in the capitalist parts. The PRC has drastically tailored its conditions for reunification with Taiwan,⁵³ while simultaneously multiplying guarantees and links to capitalism in Hong Kong. As in the field of its economic relations with world capital, so too in the political field, Beijing seems to have gone overboard. The us has not even been forced to 'sell out' Taipei, merely to make minimal concessions. So as long as the present orientation remains in force in Beijing, the West has the advantageous choice of either going on making the best out of both the capitalist and non-capitalist parts of a divided China, or accepting a gradual process of reunification which seems unlikely to affect either its medium or long run political and economic interests.

Korea is more problematic. When Deng toured the us in January 1979 he made it clear that he wanted a total, global agreement with the West without 'holes'. There are now only three 'holes', as far as one can see: Israel, South Africa, and Korea. The first two are far from East Asia, but the third poses problems at the very centre of the Beijing-OECD rapprochement. Moreover, the DPRK, despite its diplomatic alliance with the PRC and its close economic ties, has not relinquished its traditional position that us imperialism remains the number one enemy. In a highly symbolic act, the Korean Workers' Party daily, *Rodong Sinmun*, issued a blistering editorial shortly before Hua Guofeng's visit to North Korea in 1978 entitled 'Wolfish Nature of Imperialism Cannot Change'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, at the end of 1978 Pyongyang put out a decidedly lukewarm statement on the us-PRC normalization agreement which rather plaintively asked: why if the us agrees to withdraw troops from Taiwan, won't it also agree to remove them from South Korea?⁵⁵ The DPRK is thus the main hold-out in the new East Asian power alignment by its refusal to moderate

⁵² After a brief moratorium in 1979, us arms sales to Taiwan between January and September 1980 totaled \$847 million, double the sales to the 'front-line' state of Thailand. Furthermore, in early 1979 Carter stated that the us could still intervene militarily to block any PRC invasion of Taiwan. (See *International Herald Tribune*, 12 February 1979, 5-6 January 1980, and 29 September 1980).

⁵³ These now seem to boil down to the following: that Taipei drops its claim to call itself the 'Republic of China' and abandons the Nationalist flag. Immediately after the normalization agreement with the us, Deng made it clear that there were only two conditions under which Beijing would envisage force to recover Taiwan: Soviet intervention and the long-term refusal by the Guomindang to negotiate. (Deng to the us Senate delegation, *Guardian*, 10 January 1979.)

⁵⁴ *Rodong Sinmun*, 28 March 1978; in English in *Pyongyang Times*, 1 April 1978.

⁵⁵ *Pyongyang Times*, 30 December 1978.

its critique of the us and world capitalism and by its economic strategy of increasing links with the West but on its own terms, refusing to allow foreign investment or interference.⁵⁶

As for Japan, it is now in an excellent position to benefit from both the divisions of the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split. Japan did not initiate the West's rapprochement with China, but once the process began, Tokyo accelerated its own overtures—normalizing diplomatic relations with Beijing ahead of Washington and signing a Peace Treaty with China.⁵⁷ The peculiar term 'omnidirectional' which Tokyo likes to use to describe its current foreign policy (invented, significantly, to replace the term 'equidistant') signifies Japan's intent to reap the maximum self-advantage from the initiatives generated elsewhere.⁵⁸ It can keep its options open towards both Seoul and Pyongyang, Beijing and Moscow. But this 'omnidirectional' diplomacy is scarcely neutral, since Tokyo is far friendlier to Beijing than Moscow, to Seoul than Hanoi. Moreover, Japan's highly flexible economic diplomacy (which some might term opportunism) towards the post-revolutionary states does not mean that Tokyo any more than Washington is neutral toward radical social change in the region. Japan can live with and perhaps even profit from a post-revolutionary China which wishes to expand its foreign trade and make major concessions to world capitalism. But it needs and depends on ~~some~~ *some* Taiwans and South Koreas. Japanese capitalism would be sorely challenged by the prospect of other East Asian states pursuing the economic road of the DPRK or Vietnam.

A neglected feature of the new situation in Asia is Japan's accelerated rearmament and the general acceptance of this both by the Japanese public and other world powers. The left has been accused of crying 'wolf' at the spectre of a reborn Japanese militarism. But where is the dividing line between being far-sighted and being premature? According to the *Times* (London), 'Clearly and unequivocally, [Japan] has cast off its pacifist foreign and defence policy.'⁵⁹ What has been less noticed was that this was a central item in the early top-level negotiations between the us and the PRC. Japanese rearmament was one of the central topics which Nixon brought up forcefully at his first meetings with Mao and Zhou in 1972.⁶⁰ A watershed in US-PRC relations, in turn, was the Chinese acceptance of Japan's remilitarization. As Japan's largest and most ambitious overseas investment project, Mitsui's petrochemical complex in Iran, lies partly damaged as a result of the Gulf War, the logic of giving renewed priority to the Pacific Rim acquires new cogency in Tokyo, as does the idea of a

⁵⁶ There is undoubtedly a strong current in OECD policy-making circles which questions the value of a rapprochement with the DPRK. Pyongyang has proven itself crusty and cranky; besides the confrontational situation in Korea has its advantages—it is crucial to the maintenance of the system of control in the South. It helps justify a us troop presence on the Asian mainland and military sales to Seoul.

⁵⁷ 'Nixon opened the door to China, Japan walked in,' is how one us presidential adviser put it. (*Listener*, 21 February 1980, p. 231.)

⁵⁸ See Chihiro Hosoya, 'Japan's "Omnidirectional" Course,' *Japan Echo*, V, 4 (1978).

⁵⁹ *Times*, 5 September 1980.

⁶⁰ See *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, London 1979, pp. 563, 567.

Japanese military strike force capable of effective regional intervention. Compared to the political uncertainties of the Middle East and Latin America, the combined possibilities of the dependent capitalist periphery and the post-revolutionary states in East Asia are almost ideal for Japan. Kim Il Sung may be late in paying his debts, but there seems little likelihood of an Ayatollah Khomeini in Beijing.

If there is a weak link in East Asia, this may be the capitalist periphery. The assassination of Pak Jung Hi in 1979 by the head of his own CIA seems to have been the result of profound disagreements at the top of the regime about the possibility of maintaining the prevailing system of repression which was central to high economic growth in past decades. Moreover, the popular uprisings in Kwangju and elsewhere in May 1980 were much larger and more militant than the 1979 Pusan disturbances which led to Pak's murder.⁶¹ It is the combination of broad popular opposition to the regime, an unprecedented economic downturn, increasing hardship in the working and middle classes, and an internal split within the ruling class over the viability of the repressive apparatus, which poses a basic threat—not only to the current Chun Doo Hwan dictatorship in the ROK—but to the whole East Asian pattern of capital accumulation through mass repression and super-exploitation. But until more conscious and well-organized forms of working class opposition are crystallized in the ROK or elsewhere in the Inner Arc, investment in and lending to the Pacific Rim remains the most attractive proposition for the recession-hit economies of Japan and the United States. Japan and the US have virtually succeeded in removing the fastest growth area in the Third World (at least in manufacturing terms) from European control. Unlike Africa, the European powers have been unable to rebuild neo-colonial spheres of influence in East Asia upon the bases of their old overseas empires. East Asia has undergone a much greater transformation through war, militarization, and industrialization than any other area of the Third World. Japan and the US have used these epochal transformations both to outflank European capitalism and to strengthen their ties with new East Asian client states.

Capitalism is in deep crisis, but it is a crisis from which the post-revolutionary states are deriving little advantage. One of the signal events of the 1970s has been the success of world capitalism in isolating the Indochinese and Chinese Revolutions; forcing them either towards a subordinate re-integration into the world market (China) or toward a reluctant association with a very second-best Comecon which is unable to provide the kind of resources and expertise most needed (Vietnam). In the case of China, the West seems to be trying to use the upheavals within the PRC to push for a gradual reunification with Taiwan that neutralizes the possibility of radical social transformations. This new variant of 'roll-back' does not unleash the KMT army, but rather mobilizes Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and Overseas Chinese

⁶¹ For background on the Kwangju people's uprising, see *AMPO*, XII, 2 (1980); other useful sources in English include: *Monthly Review of Korean Affairs* (P.O. Box 3506, Arlington, VA 22203) and American Friends Service Committee reports (1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102).

capital (as well as the unsuspected reserves of anti-socialism within the PRC itself) to promote pro-capitalist changes on the mainland itself. Posters in the PRC urging the population to 'learn from Taiwan in economy' should be taken seriously.⁶²

World capitalism ought (in theory) be be reeling from the double-barrelled blast of the mid-1970s: recession and politico-military defeat in Indochina. Instead, it has swooped successfully with mean revenge on battered Vietnam and with astute seduction on fed-up China. We can be sure that Chiang Ching-kuo, Sir Murray MacLehose and Chun Doo Hwan do not and cannot incarnate the ideals of social justice for the peoples of Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea. But do the ideals of socialism shine forth from the words, deeds and pictures of Kim Il Sung and Deng Xiaoping? One may fairly doubt it.

⁶² *Economist*, 5 July 1980.

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The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament

Since Autumn 1979 there has been a vigorous renewal of campaigning against the nuclear arms race. Its immediate occasion was the NATO decision to deploy Cruise missiles in Western Europe, with further effects from the failure of the United States to ratify the Salt II agreement. But it was then rapidly intensified by the development of a complex international crisis, involving the Iranian Muslim revolution, the Soviet military action in Afghanistan, and heightened tensions in the Middle East and in the Gulf oil states. Yet while these conjunctural reasons are evident, it now seems that the specific campaigns against nuclear weapons have emerged with renewed authority, independence and strength. Residual and new campaigning formations have attracted many new members; successful meetings and demonstrations are again being held; and there has been a significant body of new writing and new analysis. The issues are so fateful that there can be nothing but welcome for this vigorous renewal of attention. Yet it is at just this moment that we have to look very closely again at the politics of nuclear disarmament. It is not simply that we have been

here before; that in the late 50s and early 60s we had a powerful Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which, for whatever reasons, was contained and dissipated. Indeed the most salutary effect of the renewed campaigning is that the more complacent conclusions about the decline of CND have been decisively challenged by the more substantial dimension of actual strategic and weapons developments, which the merely political conclusion—'we've had CND'—sealed off in thousands of minds. Anyone who has read the details of these new developments must be shocked by the extent to which 'the Bomb', as fact or slogan, has operated in the culture as a static if terrible entity, provoking resignation, cynicism or despair, while the reality has been the unceasing development of new and ever more dangerous systems. Moreover, in left politics especially, 'the Bomb' has for the most part been pushed into the margin of more tractable arguments about political strategy and tactics. When we now read, with full attention, the most sober descriptions of the appalling new military systems and strategies, it can seem like a waking after sleep, though it is not really that; it is yet another and perhaps now absolute demand, when we have already given available time and energy to other necessary work.

This is now the central political question. As the nuclear arms race again dominates attention, where is the rest of our politics, or is there indeed any other important kind of politics? Many comrades and friends are now arguing, eloquently, for an absolute priority of specific, autonomous and collaborative campaigning against the nuclear arms race.¹ The shock waves of recent events are pushing many thousands in that direction. But then it is here, at whatever risk of misunderstanding, that we must, as comrades and friends, ask and indeed insist on certain fundamental questions, and begin to suggest some answers.

Which Anti-Nuclear Campaign?

There is a first and relatively simple set of questions. They can be summarized as: give absolute priority to *which* campaign against the arms race? In Britain, for example, there are at least three campaigns, all gaining support. There is the revived Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), campaigning broadly but centred on a demand for unilateral British nuclear disarmament, in very much its original terms. Coherently but not exclusively associated with this is the urgent campaign against the siting of Cruise missiles in Britain. Then, second, there is the new and important campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament (END), still needing to resolve its relations with an older unilateralism, but centred on proposals 'to free the entire territory of Europe, from Poland to Portugal, from nuclear weapons, air and submarine bases'.² Third, there is the World Disarmament Campaign, centred on the comprehensive proposals of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, convened in 1978 and to be renewed in 1982. In the urgency of actual campaigning against powerful opposing

¹ The most eloquent example of this position is Edward Thompson's 'Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization,' *NLS* 121, May–June 1980.

² END statement of which the present author was a signatory; reprinted in E. P. Thompson and Dan Smith (eds.), *Protest and Survival*, London 1980, p. 224.

forces, the differences of emphasis, some radical, between these campaigns can and at times must be set aside. Yet it is not only that the differences are already being exploited by the political and military establishments. It is that arguments drawn from these differences of emphasis become confused, even in single minds, and that genuine differences of policy and affiliation are overridden by the too simple conclusion that since all are against the arms race, all know how they will work to end it.

This state of mind was memorably and damagingly indicated at the 1980 Labour Party conference, when motions deriving from all three positions were passed, allowing endless opportunities for subsequent confusion and double-talk. Moreover it is significant, as was again evident at the Labour Conference, that at just the points where these differences of emphasis need to be discussed there is a regular reversion—of course in its own terms impressive—to simple restatement of the horrors of nuclear war, which are indeed the beginning but cannot function as the conclusion of any of the arguments. Nobody is quicker to agree about these horrors than the defenders and actual executants of the arms race, who then derive their own models of deterrence and swing much public opinion behind them. If a version of absolute priority to the anti-nuclear-weapons campaigns is then practically dependent on simple restatement of the terrible consequences of nuclear war, it is plainly insufficient.

There seem to me to be three broad questions. First, whether the development of nuclear weapons, and of the political and military systems associated with them, has so changed the character of otherwise determined social orders, that what we now confront, as Edward Thompson has powerfully argued, is in effect a new social condition of 'exterminism'. Second, within a different context, there is the question of the current real meanings of the leading terms of the general argument, notably 'deterrence', 'multilateralism' and 'unilateralism'. Third, and now of critical importance (though it depends on our answers to the preceding questions), what is or should be the specifically socialist contribution to activity against the nuclear arms race, whether autonomous or as an element in broader collaborative campaigns?

I. Nuclear Weapons and the Social Order

'The Bomb' and Technological Determinism

'If "the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist", what are we given by those Satanic mills which are now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination?'³ The question is urgent and relevant, but behind it, of course, is another question: who 'gave us' the hand-mill, the steam-mill, the missile factories? The intricate relations between a technology and a mode of production, and indeed between a mode of production and a social order, are only rarely of a kind to

³ Ibid., p. 7.

permit simple analysis of cause and effect. Technological determinism, as indicated in that combined sentence from Marx and Edward Thompson, is, when taken seriously, a form of intellectual closure of the complexities of social process. In its exclusion of human actions, interests and intentions, in favour of a selected and reified image of their causes and results, it systematically post-dates history and excludes all other versions of cause. This is serious everywhere, but in the case of nuclear weapons it is especially disabling. Even when, more plausibly, it is in effect a form of shorthand, it steers us away from originating and continuing causes, and promotes (ironically, in the same mode as the ideologies which the weapons systems now support) a sense of helplessness beneath a vast, impersonal and uncontrollable force. For there is then nothing left but the subordinated responses of passivity or protest, cynical resignation or prophecy.⁴ That the latter response in each pairing is infinitely better, morally and politically, should go without saying. But that the tone of a campaign can be radically affected by the initial assumption of so absolute and overpowering a system is already evident, mixed incongruously as it also is with the vigorous organization and reaching out to others which follow from different initial bearings.

In the case of nuclear weapons, nothing is more evident than that they were consciously sought and developed, and have continued to be consciously sought and developed. It is true that, as so often in modern technological innovations, much of the basic research had been done for quite other reasons, without foreseeing this particular result. But again as in many other comparable cases, the crucial moment of passage from scientific knowledge to technical invention, and then from technical invention to a systematic technology, depended on conscious selection and investment by an existing social order, for known and foreseen purposes. Thus the atomic bomb was developed within a situation of total war, under the familiar threat that the enemy might also be developing it, by states which were *already* practising the saturation-bombing and fire-bombing of cities and civilian populations. The atomic bomb gave them very much greater destructive power to do the same things more absolutely, more terribly, and (with the new genetic effects of radiation) more lastingly. Yet while it is true that massacre is not a twentieth-century invention, it has made a radical difference that massacre was first industrialized, in the nineteenth-century development of high explosives and the twentieth-century development of the bombing plane, and then, in the late-twentieth-century development of guided missile systems, in effect automated. It is not only, though it is most immediately, a matter of nuclear weapons. Contemporary developments in chemical and bacteriological weapons, also capable of combination with missile technology, belong to the same escalation in the extent and practicality of massacre.

⁴ The common use of the term 'apocalypse' (cf. *Apocalypse Now?*, Spokesman Pamphlet, London 1980, and Thompson, p. 28), with a curious shift from the sense of 'revelation' to a sense of ultimate destruction, marks this development. For a nuclear war would not be an 'apocalypse'; it would be at once more terrible and more sordid, with no revelation.

Military technology has often, perhaps always, been a significant factor in the constitution of a social order. It also directly affects the struggles of classes. If the characteristic effective weapon is within the reach or use of peasants and workers there is a different ultimate balance of class forces from those periods in which effective weapons depend on control of major industrial plants or advanced scientific research. What we have really to ask, about the full range of nuclear and related weapons, is what specific variations they have introduced into the shifting but always crucial relations between a military technology and a social order. Two types of variation are evident: international and internal.

Nuclear Weapons and the International Order

It was commonly said, when the atomic bomb had just been invented, that there were now only two or three states capable of waging major war. Indeed this perspective, learned with much else from James Burnham, was the basis for Orwell's projection of 1984, in which three super-states, in shifting alliance and counter-alliance, with absolute repressive and propagandist control of their internal populations, were in a state of effectively permanent war. It is essentially this Orwellian nightmare ('1984' as 'exterminism') which is now being revived. The mere fact of revival does not affect its truth, either way. But it is worth comparing the prophecy with the history. The emergence of superpowers was correctly foreseen. As it happens this was not primarily a function of the atomic bomb or even of the hydrogen bomb, even though these had conferred immediate and in certain situations decisive military advantages. For there were definite stages within the new technology, and the crucial stage, we can now see, was the combination of nuclear weapons with advanced missile technology, from the mid-1950s: a combination, at its continually rising level, which still keeps the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers in a period in which other states have acquired nuclear weapons but less effective or more vulnerable means of delivery. All the other projections are more arguable. There has been a very powerful and dangerous grouping of secondary states in direct alliances with the superpowers. In the dimension of nuclear weapons and related military strategy these alliances have indeed taken on something of the character of super-states, though at other levels this development is much less complete and is subject to other, often major, political interests and processes.

At the same time, the rest of the world, which had been conveniently incorporated and in effect neglected in the Orwellian perspective, has been both object and subject in this dominating and dangerous history. It is ironic that one of the principal (mainly Chinese) arguments against agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons has been the evident danger of superpower hegemonism: an impulse to political independence which, combined with certain regional rivalries, has in fact multiplied the nuclear arsenals. In direct military ways, in the search for bases in the global strategy which accompanied missile-nuclear and related technology, there has been constant pressure to reduce independent or ex-dependent states to objects in the super-power military competition. But then, while much of this has followed

from the imperatives of military technology, and has even been continued, in blind thrusts, when changes in the technology made it no longer so necessary in military terms, it is also true and crucial that the central thrust of this deadly competition has been not primarily military-technological but, in the broadest sense, political. But this fundamentally political character of the competition in its turn modifies the directly military competition. It is necessary for the superpowers not only, as often, to pretend, but in many cases actually to be concerned with those broader interests which originate in the rest of the world. Thus political and economic struggles which a simple military hegemonism would have *a priori* excluded have in fact continuously and powerfully occurred, and have included the substantial if still incomplete liberation of many peoples who are nowhere near having nuclear-weapons capability. At the same time not only the superpowers but many secondary states have exported other forms of armament with a recklessness, often distinct from the terms of the primary competition, which has led to twenty-five million (and rising) war deaths in a period in which nuclear weapons had been supposed to be determining and in which none had been actually used. Nothing in this argument reduces the central danger of direct nuclear war between the superpowers and their locked-in nuclear alliances. But, as we shall see again in analysing the ideology of deterrence, the apparent technologically determined process has been at most imperfectly realized, and in many significant cases has been inoperative, within the complexities of a necessarily broader world history.

Nuclear Weapons and Internal Controls

The other half of the Orwellian projection has also to be taken seriously. First, in the Cold War competition for the development of nuclear weapons, then in their continuing technical development, there have been dramatic increases in the levels of surveillance and control, and of espionage and counter-espionage, in capitalist societies like our own. Whether there has been a similar increase in Soviet-controlled societies, and especially in the Soviet Union which before nuclear weapons already had an immense apparatus of this kind, is more arguable. But there can be no denying that, taken as a whole, as not only direct repression and control but as an increasingly powerful propaganda for war preparations, secrecy, xenophobia and distrust, these internal developments have been contemporary with nuclear weapons. Yet there is again a major qualification. Precisely because the central competition is not only military-technological but is also, in the broadest sense, political, it is an underestimation of the dangers to suppose that they relate to nuclear weapons alone. On the contrary, what is now most dangerous in capitalist societies is the powerful attempt, already too widely successful, to achieve a symmetry between the external (military) threat—directly identified as the Soviet Union—and the internal threat to the capitalist social order which is primarily constituted by an indigenous working class and its organizations and claims. We should be in a much better situation than we now are if surveillance and secrecy were directed only against actual and possible Soviet agents, or for national military security. In fact, significantly, there is at least as much use of these controls, now aided by major

technological developments of their own, against indigenous working-class and related political organizations. If this threatening symmetry of an external and an internal enemy is ever fully politically achieved, we shall indeed be in extreme danger.

At the same time, while the centralized secrecy-and-security state cannot be reduced, causatively, to nuclear weapons and their systems, there is one particular and vital respect in which the threat to democracy is indeed, in effect, technologically determined. This is not the possession of nuclear weapons as such, but their combination with missile technology. There has been a dramatic shortening of time for effective military decisions. The greatly increased accuracy of recent guidance systems, in the period of microprocessors, and the related shift from counter-city to counter-force strategy, have again reduced this margin.⁵ It is then not only that secondary states have ceded their powers of ultimate political decision while they remain in nuclear alliances, but that within such a technology this ceding and centralization of powers is, in its own terms, rational. While much might be done in the more normal political areas of approaches to such a crisis, the fact remains that to assent to missile-nuclear technology is to assent to the loss of independence in ultimate decisions and, spreading back from that, to a steady loss of independence and openness in a much wider political area. It is this dangerous reality which now confronts the peoples of Europe, East and West. Combined, as it now is, with the siting of medium-range missiles, controlled from the same foreign centres, in the developing strategy of a 'theatre' (European) or 'limited' nuclear war, it compels, while we still have time, the most far-reaching political struggles.

II. Deterrence, Multilateralism or Unilateralism?

Deterrence as Strategy and Ideology

Deterrence is both a strategy and an ideology. We should be wrong if we failed to acknowledge some limited validity of deterrence as a strategy. Just because there is no effective general defence against nuclear weapons, or more strictly against nuclear missiles, there is some initial rationality in the argument that if an enemy possesses them, the only policy, short of pacifism, is to acquire and maintain a deterrent capability of the same kind. We have only to look at the international politics of the mid-late 1940s, when the United States but not the Soviet Union possessed atomic weapons, and when proposals for use of this monopoly to destroy the world centre of communism while there was still time acquired significant support, over a surprising range, to realize that in this as in so much else a monopoly of such terrible power, in any hands, is profoundly dangerous. It was then argued (as by Burnham in *The Struggle for the World*, 1947) that as soon as two hostile nations possessed atomic weapons nuclear war would follow almost immediately, and predictions of this kind—that possession implied inevitable use—have been made ever since,

⁵ See Michael Pentz's excellent pamphlet *Towards the Final Abyss?*, Bernal Peace Library, London 1980.

with a recurring confidence (in fact a recurring despair) unshaken by the passage of several predicted crucial stages. It has not been only military deterrence which has so far falsified these predictions. The whole complex of political struggles, the widespread public revulsion from any *first* use of nuclear weapons, and further those characteristics of nuclear weapons themselves, which in the unpredictable effects of fallout introduced a new qualitative, and, in some respects, qualifying element in calculations of aggression have been powerful and at times even leading factors. Yet also, in its limited direct context, deterrence has not been ineffective. Indeed it is significant that when we place this fact of 'mutually assured destruction'—in itself so insane a basis for any lasting polity—within actual world-political relations since 1945, we find that it was just because deterrence was operative in direct relations between the United States and the Soviet Union that steadily, and very dangerously, it had to be masked as a real strategic concept and replaced, confusingly under the same name, by deterrence as an ideology.

The crucial dividing line, now so vital in the struggle for public acquiescence or support, is, to put it bluntly, between deterrence from direct military attack, which is still widely and understandably supported, and on the other hand the deterrence of communism *per se*. Of course in practice the strategy and the ideology are intricately connected, but at the level of public argument they are intolerably and often deliberately confused. If it is evidence of Soviet aggression that an Asian or African country makes a socialist or communist revolution, then the simplicities of deterrence against a direct military attack are left far behind. The natural and wholly reasonable desire of all peoples to be secure against direct attack, which ought never for a moment to be denied or even questioned by those of us who are against nuclear weapons and the arms race, is systematically exploited for these other and only ever partly disclosed objectives. It is then a necessary element of any effective campaign to so clarify the differences between the strategy and the ideology that it will be possible to isolate all those who can, without hyperbole, be called warmongers. Thus it is only on the powerfully organized right of West European and North American politics that the ideology becomes again a strategy: to destroy communism everywhere. Yet it has in practice been far too easy for this grouping to enrol natural desires for security and independence into their quite different objectives. Moreover we make it easier for them if we do not ourselves start, genuinely, from these desires, and go on to show their ultimate (if not always immediate) incompatibility with nuclear weapons and the arms race.

We can best do this if we can show that it is indeed from the limited success of deterrence against direct nuclear attack that the most dangerous recent strategies have been developed. It is clear that it has been in periods of significant political and economic change beyond the terms of direct us-USSR relations that intensification of what is still called deterrent nuclear weapons development has occurred. This has been so especially in periods of intensified national liberation struggles, with peaks around Cuba in the early sixties and after Angola in the seventies. At these points the distinction between

strategy and ideology is particularly evident, and it has been evident again, though in confused ways, in the complex of changes in Iran and Afghanistan. Moreover it is clear that *direct* deterrence had been achieved by the mid-late 1950s. We have then to allow something—perhaps much—for the internal improvement and modernization of these systems, at this level and within this strategy. It then becomes clear that the vast development of overkill capacity, now continuing at a rising rate, belongs strictly to the ideology, and has to be firmly referred not to matters of national security but to a both overt and covert world political struggle. Moreover it is within the limited success of direct us—ussr deterrence that the particular and now exceptional danger for Europe has developed. It is from the facts of that standoff that Europe has been nominated as a ‘theatre’ for another ‘scenario’, in which it is (on the military evidence, quite irrationally) believed that a limited nuclear war could be fought, as a controlled part of the global struggle. Here, decisively, for the peoples of Western Europe—and especially in these years in which the nuclear weapons for just such a war are being actively deployed—the strategy and the ideology can be seen as distinct. From deterrent subjects, which we could still, however unreasonably, imagine ourselves to be, we have become objects in an ideology of deterrence determined by interests wholly beyond us as nations or as peoples, though significantly not beyond our frontiers as the interests of existing ruling classes. Whatever the scenario might be for others, for us as peoples it is from the opening scene the final tragedy. Global deterrence would have achieved a Europe in which there was nobody left to deter or be deterred.

Multilateralism: Codeword for Rearmament?

‘Multilateralism’, as a concept, is often paired with ‘deterrence’. This is the consistent orthodox argument which has so far commanded majority support. We can begin to break the pairing when we have distinguished between deterrence as strategy and as ideology. It is not impossible that from deterrence as military strategy, at a certain phase of its development, staged mutual disarmament might have been negotiated. But within the *ideology* of deterrence, in which vast political forces of an absolute kind, are at once and necessarily engaged, there can and will be no disarmament. The long-sustained promise, that from this necessary strength disarmament can be negotiated, has been thoroughly falsified, and it is extraordinary that it can still be so brazenly asserted, as cover for yet one more stage of military escalation. At the same time, however, multilateral disarmament is indeed the only way to security. The World Disarmament Campaign is on very strong ground when it argues not only for this, but for the urgent inclusion of other than nuclear weapons. Nuclear war is indeed the worst possibility, but chemical and bacteriological war are only minimally less appalling. Even what is called conventional war, with the combined use of advanced high explosives and the present capacities of missile technology, could now destroy urban civilization. Thus only multilateral disarmament can be accepted as an adequate objective. At the same time we have to distinguish between multilateralism as a political strategy and multilateralism as an ideology.

To a very large extent, in current debates, 'multilateralism' is in fact a codeword for continued acquiescence in the policy of military alliances and the arms race. In deceptive or self-deceptive ways, the longing for disarmament is ideologically captured as the cover for yet another stage of rearmament. It becomes an essential objective of any campaign to break this false pairing, but again this can only be done if the reasonableness of genuine multilateralism is fully acknowledged. One important way of doing this is to break the multilateralist 'code' at its weakest point which while speaking of 'multilateralism' really entails an exclusive *bilateralism*. It is not, for example, the governments of Europe who will attempt negotiation on the deployment and possible reduction of nuclear missiles within their territories. Within the logic of the alliances, this primary and indeed multilateral responsibility is virtually without protest surrendered and displaced to bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. 'Multilateralism' is then only a code for those processes of polarization and submission to the loss of national independence. It is against this dangerous and habitual obscuration that an impulse to genuine multilateralism has much to contribute. This is the crucial significance of the campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament, both in its own terms, of resuming direct responsibility, and in its genuine compatibility with the World Disarmament Campaign.

Unilateralism Today and Yesterday

This may and in my view should be the way in which the campaign for European nuclear disarmament develops. But it is already evident that the campaign overlaps with both a residual and a revived 'unilateralism', and the current meanings of this concept have now again to be carefully examined. 'Unilateralism' must first be distinguished, historically, from pacifism, which has always, and coherently, proposed the unilateral pacific act, including the renunciation of all weapons, as the first move to break the dangerous deadlock of armed confrontation. But 'unilateralism' acquired more specific and more limited meanings in a particular period—the late 1950s—in which certain circumstances were operative. Britain was at that time the only nuclear-weapons state other than the superpowers, so that on the one hand unilateral British renunciation could be argued as the first necessary practical step to prevent the proliferation of nuclear-weapons states, and on the other hand as a moral example to all states including the superpowers. Furthermore, there was the desire to get out from under this dangerous superpower rivalry, whether positively as a non-aligned state, or negatively as 'leaving them to get on with it'; in either case on the assumption that Britain could be independent and autonomous. What matters now, within a resurgence which is also in some respects a continuity, is to re-examine circumstances before we simply resume old responses. Thus the argument against proliferation is significantly different in the 1980s as compared with the 1950s, and in any case has now to include attention to the problems of superpower monopoly ('hegemonism') which, quite apart from being insufficiently analysed in that earlier phase, are now major political realities. Deprived of this immediate practical bearing, the argument of moral example has, in my view, no reasonable resting place short of pacifism, which

remains, in the multiplying dangers of international violence, one of the most profound and accessible responses to evil in our world and culture.

Thus unilateralism of a non-pacifist kind, in the 1980s, has either to be coherently political, with all its consequences followed through, or to resign itself to rhetorical evasiveness. It is clear that the loose assembly of diverse political forces around unilateralism, which for a time held but then failed to hold in the late 1950s and early 1960s, cannot now for long be reconstituted on the old terms. What has always been insufficient in its arguments, but now much less forgivably, is any realistic facing of the full significance of such an act by a state like Britain. It is significantly often at this point, when in any political campaign aiming for majority support the most stringent realism is an absolute requirement, that there is a rhetorical loop back to the undoubted evils and dangers of nuclear war and to the abstraction of 'the Bomb'. What then must we really face? The central fact is that Britain at every level—military, political, economic and cultural—has been locked into 'the alliance', which is at once a life-or-death military system and a powerful organization of the most developed capitalist states and economies. To take Britain out of that alliance would be a major shift in the balance of forces, and therefore at once a confrontation of the most serious kind. Every kind of counterforce, certainly economic and political, would be at once deployed against it, and there could be no restriction of the resulting struggle to the theoretically separable issue of nuclear weapons. Thus a theoretically restricted campaign, based on an eventual popular refusal of the dangers of nuclear war, would arrive, in reality, at a stage of general struggle for which it would be quite unprepared.

At the same time the general notion of the unilateral act, now commonly construed as 'renunciation', has in practice to be divided into separable political acts and stages. What most immediately enters the political argument is, first, on a European scale, the decision about medium-range missiles specifically designed for a 'limited' nuclear war on our own territories; and second, in Britain, the decision about the renewal, into a third generation, of the so-called independent nuclear capability, by the purchase of Trident missiles from the United States. Political campaigns around each of these decisions can but need not be conducted in terms of old-style unilateralism. It is significant that there already seems to be more political support for the refusal of these stages of escalation than for a general and indiscriminate 'unilateralism'. It is understandable that many who have taken the full measure of the existing dangers of nuclear weapons and nuclear-alliance strategy should advocate absolute positions, which can alone express our full moral sense, and reject or even despise more limited positions as mere political calculation. But since the dangers are indeed so great, there is also a case for saying that we must advance wherever we can, and that campaigns against Cruise and Trident need not, in these critical years, involve, and often be politically limited by, the full unilateralist case. For to refuse the siting of Cruise missiles on our territories, as part of a process of demanding multilateral European negotiations for the removal of all such missiles

and the related bomber and submarine bases from the territories of 'Europe from Poland to Portugal,' is not, in any ordinary sense, 'unilateralism'. It is the exercise of independence and sovereignty as a stage in a negotiating process for which there is still (just) time. Similarly in the case of the Trident purchase; it can be also a conscious entry into the negotiating process of strategic arms limitation, by refusing the (in fact unilateral) escalation of British-based missile-nuclear systems. Positive campaigns for these specific initiatives can then in practice be very different from the relatively unfocused demand for 'unilateral renunciation', and should be kept rationally distinct.

Of course, what remains to be faced, although at a different level from old-style unilateralism, is the full consequence of such positive refusals and initiatives. For these more specific moves would not only challenge existing strategic dispositions and calculations but would also, just as radically, challenge the logic of superpower hegemonism. The consequent political struggles would be on an even wider stage than that of the consequences of old-style British unilateralism. But that the stage would be wider is an opportunity as well as a problem, and it is in this context that we must examine one of the deeper structures of British unilateralism.

The Problem of 'British' Nationalism

It is very noticeable now that there is a congruence, within that spectrum of opinion which we can describe, broadly, as the Labour Left, between economic, political and peace campaigns which are all, in a general sense, unilateralist. Proposals for a siege or near-siege economy, protected by the strongest version of import controls; proposals for the recovery of political sovereignty or actual withdrawal from the EEC; proposals for the unnegotiated unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons and bases: all have this common style. There are strong arguments within each of the positions, but the decisive common factors seem to be a radical overestimation of Britain's capacity and effect in independent action, and a radical underestimate of the degree of actual penetration of British economy and society by both international capitalism and the military-political alliance which exists to defend it. There can be no question that we have to find ways to contain this penetration and to roll it back, but it is then a matter of very intricate and realistic economic and political argument to find the most effective ways. The Labour Left position, at its simplest public level, seems to be not only an abstract short-cut through all these actual difficulties, but based in a very deep political structure which characteristically idealizes desirable conditions and forces, while, as a protection against more radical perspectives, reducing real opposing forces to abstract and alien entities. For the question is never what we could legally do, or find some temporary majority for doing. The question is one of broad struggle. And if the question is one of struggle, the political campaign must be a matter of mobilizing real forces on the most favourable possible ground. It would be unfair to say that the passing of resolutions, even within relatively etiolated structures, is a deliberate evasion of this much harder political reality. Properly understood, it can be part of the process of actual mobilization. But

what does seem to be an evasion is the simple rhetoric of 'go it alone'. A characteristic, but a crucial example, can be given in this context. If we are seriously proposing a collaborative campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament, is it sensible at the same time to propose simple withdrawal from the EEC? What is necessary and possible, in both cases, is a radical negotiation, and this can only really be undertaken on a European rather than simply a British scale. None of the actual negotiating steps is easy, but I have found in discussion that the dominant mood thus far, on the EEC as on nuclear weapons, is an impatient insistence on the 'swift, decisive unilateral act', after which all the radical consequences, and the radical struggles, for which a maximum of carefully prepared collaboration and alliance would undoubtedly be necessary, would be faced *ad hoc*.⁶ Yet in any of these struggles, and especially in the struggle against the polarized hegemonism of the nuclear alliances, only combined action, on a European scale (of course based on what are also nationally conducted and to some extent uneven and differently inflected campaigns) has any realistic chance of success. Thus we must consistently advance *European* rather than British-unilateralist arguments and objectives.

III. Socialism and the Nuclear-Weapons Systems

It is understandable that some comrades should argue that the danger of nuclear war is now so great that we should set aside all other considerations and unite to achieve disarmament and peace. Anyone who does not at times feel like this is indeed underestimating the appalling immediate dangers. Yet some of us at least must go on to say, first, that specifically socialist analyses of the production and reproduction of these dangers are, while undoubtedly incomplete, still centrally relevant; and, second, that we have still to look to specifically socialist analysis and mobilization to generate the linked forces that will in fact be capable of significantly reducing and finally ending these dangers.

This should never be said arrogantly, or within some exclusivist rhetoric. There is an urgent duty on all socialists to join in collaborative campaigns in at least seven general areas: (a) heightening public consciousness of the specific as well as the general dangers of modern missile-nuclear and other weapons systems; (b) exposing the deceptive official campaigns about the possibilities of 'civil defence' against nuclear attacks; (c) organizing public pressure for all possible measures of arms limitation and negotiated disarmament; (d) publishing and explaining the details of current weapons development and rearmament, and, in close relation to these, the complex of actual offers, counter-offers and stages of negotiation in limitation and disarmament negotiations; (e) organizing campaigns to widen the negotiating process, not only between states but within societies, thus including opposition to arbitrary secrecy and security controls; (f) demonstrating the real links between nuclear-energy and nuclear-weapons

⁶ An idealized projection of a Labour government, under 'Left' leadership, which would resolve and execute such policies, may be as misleading now as it was in the early 1960s, when the cause of nuclear disarmament was widely entrusted to just such a projection.

programmes, including the realities of some consequent proliferation of nuclear weapons (as in the newly formed Anti-Nuclear Campaign); (g) opposing the naturalization of arms production and export as part of the economic strategy of the advanced industrial world.

This is already a heavy list, yet on each of these issues there is already significant public campaigning and active socialist involvement. What has then still to be asked, however, is whether there are further specific socialist contributions to be made both within collaborative campaigns and independently. Some answers can be suggested in three areas: (i) relations between the concepts of a 'ruling class' and a 'military-industrial complex', with evident effects on the question of substituting 'exterminism' for existing or possible categories of socialist analysis; (ii) the very difficult question of what is called, in some circles, the 'socialist bomb' or 'the missiles of the international working class'; (iii) the problem of linkages between military and economic crisis.

The Ruling Class and the 'Military-Industrial Complex'

It is obviously correct to identify and to stress the specific complex of arms-production, military, research and state-security interests within contemporary advanced capitalist societies. It is also necessary to identify an analogous but far from identical complex within such socialist states as the Soviet Union and China. Yet it is almost certainly wrong, first, to fuse these different formations as a single entity, and, second, to override more general concepts of a ruling class by the priority of these specific complexes. The problem would have to be analytically separated to recognize its specificity within the two contrasting systems, but there are still some preliminary general points. It is of the essence of a ruling class that it possesses a monopoly or a predominance of overt or threatening violence. This is not a consequence of nuclear-weapons systems, and indeed it has been mainly in non-nuclear societies that the specific military-state-security formation has acquired absolute or determining power. The realities of more general productive development have created, in more advanced and complex economies, other effective major formations within the ruling class; and the true political process, at this level, is much more a matter of the shifting relations between these formations than of any inevitable dominance. The military-security formation has major advantages, and these are increased in conditions of international conflict. But just because what it produces is at once so deadly and so negative, it can only temporarily achieve that command of resources and policies which would ensure its stable dominance. It is then true that the present nuclear arms race is producing conditions in which the possibilities of dominance form a rising tendency. Yet the ruling class as a whole still has other interests, both in its own immediate terms and in relation to assuring its continued dominance over the whole life of the society, which must include satisfying increasing non-military economic needs and demands of its people. It has also political interests in its need to present its central objectives in those broader terms which can command a necessary consent or acquiescence. Therefore, no ruling class, and *a fortiori* no whole social formation, can be reduced to the military-security element. If it is true that the military-

security complex, just because of its negativity, moves on its own towards certain ultimate irrationalities, in which the whole social order exists to serve and supply it, it is also true that other ruling-class formations, to say nothing of other classes, exert constant and powerful practical pressures of a different kind, which are then the materials of real politics. The observable fluctuations of military spending programmes and of broad political strategies are the indices of these continuing internal and externally affected struggles.

In lieu of more precise analysis of these dangerous internal formations, within the different social orders of the two major systems, we can note certain contradictions. Within capitalist societies, the military and related industries may not, for all their command of research, be a genuine leading sector. Their crude counter-cyclical role, and their privileged rate of profit, can distort the programmes and the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, while their massive levies of public revenue can disrupt investment programmes and produce unintended crisis and socio-economic discontent. The present crisis of ordinary manufacturing industry, with its consequences in major unemployment, is perhaps just such a case, and it is significant that it is often from within the ruling class that campaigns against the 'military-industrial complex' have been mounted. Meanwhile in the centralized socialist systems it is evident that the scale of military expenditure is economically crippling and has virtually no advantages for any productive sector. There the linkage is different, between the bureaucratic formation of the ruling class itself and the necessary support of military and state-security formations. The contradiction between an unproductive high-military economy and the dependence of a political leadership on exceptional monopoly of power and force is indeed very dangerous, but is itself reciprocally affected by external developments within the contradictions of its opponent system. Thus we need not conclude that there is any genuine inevitability in the formation and tendency to dominate of these powerful internal sectors. A full analysis must include a recognition of the 'dysfunctional' aspects of the arms race for both social systems.

'The Socialist Bomb' (sic)

The simplest version of the argument that Soviet nuclear-weapons systems are in effect the 'socialist bomb', demanding the support of the international working class, scarcely merits attention. It is an inescapable fact of nuclear weapons, with their indiscriminate destruction of whole populations, that they cannot be class-selective. The real consequence of that kind of argument is an impotent alienation and, ultimately, treason against every particular working class. Yet there are more serious arguments, as for example the position taken by Ernest Mandel in 1970.⁷ In place of the essentially abstract propositions of 'international tension' and the 'dangers of war', such arguments begin from the facts of the imperialist world-system, including its ineradicable hostility not only to existing socialist

⁷ 'Peaceful Coexistence and World Revolution,' in Robin Blackburn (ed.), *Revolution and Class Struggle*, London 1978, pp. 284-293.

states but to all national liberation struggles which threaten imperialist economic and strategic interests. All socialists who share this analysis of the present world crisis are faced with exceptionally difficult questions when they also, as they must, recognize the extraordinary and quite unprecedented dangers of nuclear war. It is one thing to hold to a strategy of victory against imperialism, but it is quite another to suppose that there can be any victory worth having through the ultimate devastation of a nuclear war.

There are then two possible positions. The first, which is more often drifted into than consciously adopted, involves using the legitimate fear of nuclear war, which after all can in the West be very freely expressed and campaigned on, as a way of objectively weakening the imperialist defence systems, thus tilting the strategic balance. The fact that this is constantly alleged, by the right, against *every* campaign for nuclear disarmament (and then often with ludicrous mis-identifications), ought not to blind us to the fact that it can be, in some cases, objectively and even subjectively true. It would make for intellectual honesty if those who have really adopted this position would say so; elaborating the radical case for a non-pacifist unilateralism. What is wrong with this position (and with any of the tactics and emphases which consciously or unconsciously follow from it) is, however, its uncritical identification of the interests of socialism and of anti-imperialism with the Soviet state. It is necessary, of course, to oppose absolutely all those who wish to destroy or threaten the Soviet state and its allies, or socialist China, or the new revolutionary states. This involves radical opposition to nuclear rearmament, to strategies of global containment, and to the whole complex of imperialist military alliances and arms-export client regimes. Yet this duty of all socialists must be distinguished from naive or false-naive positions in the matter of the central nuclear-weapons confrontation. There are duties of defence of the international working class, but these necessarily include the whole working class, in each of the systems and beyond them, and cannot be discharged by deliberate or as it were accidental projection to the interests of a single state military order.

The second available position is more complex, but more adequate. It begins from the fact that it has been primarily the long pressures of imperialism against the new socialist and national-liberation states that have distorted, often disastrously, the realization of revolutionary socialism and democracy. From such a position it is possible both to recognize and struggle to end the crimes of imperialism and at the same time look full in the face the consequences, within the revolutionary states, new and old, of prolonged militarization and a state of political siege. Nor is this some neutralist position. It is centrally in the interests of socialism itself that these dangerous and objectively anti-socialist conditions should be diminished and finally abolished. Thus initiatives for disarmament must be primarily directed to the *inseparable* processes of weakening the imperialist offensive and strengthening the forces of socialism against those formations which now distort it. This requires, in the matter of proposals, the most scrupulous attention to real popular interests, rather than to any existing state interests. There is then an overwhelming socialist interest

in nuclear disarmament, since the missile-nuclear systems objectively strengthen bloc politics, hegemonism and centralized military-security state apparatuses.

This emphasis can be the particular merit of the emerging campaign for European nuclear disarmament. Committed, as it must be, to East-West reciprocity, to the steady enlargement of demilitarized zones through the various layers of weapons systems, and then to the necessary gaining of some real *political* space in Europe; it is the only campaign which is entirely congruent with the long-term interests of all European socialists. It will remain very difficult to keep the emphasis right, not only against misrepresentation and opposition, but between ourselves. Real responses will be required from within the Soviet alliance, and these are more likely to come if we make it clear that our disarmament proposals are integral with renewed efforts to advance socialism within our own countries; that they involve significant and difficult breaks with the strategy and ideology of the imperialist and anti-communist alliance; and, crucially, that the condition of success of any of these struggles is a serious reciprocity, allowing the development of movements of national-popular support, rather than any simple taking of advantage of peace campaigns. It would be a very serious misreading of our campaign by anyone in the East to conclude that it is manipulable in the interests of bloc-politics and military advantage. But then it would be also a serious misdirection of our campaign if it became, at any point, in fact or by default, manipulable.

The Necessary Linkages

To support the Campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament does not necessarily mean believing that the central fracture and confrontation is in Europe. The most dangerous nuclear arena is here, but the crucial political struggles and dangers are very much more widespread. Thus the socialist contribution to the politics of nuclear disarmament must be more than simply collaborative, and must include solidarity with Third World struggles against an imperialist economic system which globally reproduces hunger and exploitation. This is no matter of riding the peace campaigns for some partisan objectives. There is now a profound linkage between the most actual and recurrent dangers of war and the specific crises of the imperialist world system. The use of military force and intimidation to maintain systems of power and exploitation—over and above the systems of military-strategic deployment—is still the central threat to peace. If we are to understand and explain this fully, we have to move on from the known and still crucial facts of the international economic order, to the now rapidly emerging facts of the crisis of resources. It has become an absolute duty for Western socialists to prepare, in good time, the positions from which we can oppose and defeat attempts to secure scarce resources—the case of oil is the most urgent current example—by military interventions, whether direct or indirect. Such interventions will of course attempt to recruit popular opinion by appeals for the protection of our (privileged) ‘way of life’. Given the effects of the simultaneous crisis of imposed unemployment and deprivation on the working peoples of

the West, no socialist can suppose that these attempts will be easy to defeat. But there is no contradiction between such work and campaigns for nuclear disarmament. Indeed unless such campaigns are developed, in practical and predictive ways, the more isolated peace campaigns could be simply overwhelmed. Such considerations are also relevant to what is now the major problem of the traditional linkage between opposition to rearmament and opposition to unemployment and social deprivation. There are still real links between essentially wasteful military spending and poverty and deprivation in the rest of the social order. But here, as elsewhere, there is not going to be any simple return to the *status quo ante*. We may have to face the old problem of a reactionary connection between rearmament and the revival of employment. But beyond this there are new and quite major problems of change, if both peace and decent living standards are to be maintained in the old capitalist world. It is not just a matter of cancelling useless or obscene military expenditure, nor even of redirecting investment to alternative civilian manufacture. The changes will have to involve radical transformations, internally and externally, rather than simple cancellations or reversions. Despite the difficulties of such transformations, they must be central priorities within any agenda of working for peace.

This can appear only to add to our burdens, for which our present strength is still insufficient. But this must be the final point of the present argument. It is, fortunately, still possible to generate movements for peace and for disarmament on the most general human grounds. That these are again growing is a significant gain against the culture and politics of violence. Yet alike for their intellectual adequacy and for extension of their support it is necessary to reach beyond the moving and honourable refusals on which many of them still characteristically depend. To build peace, now more than ever, it is necessary to build more than peace. To refuse nuclear weapons, we have to refuse much more than nuclear weapons. Unless the refusals can be connected with such building, unless protest can be connected with and surpassed by significant practical construction, our strength will remain insufficient. It is then in making hope practical, rather than despair convincing, that we must resume and change and extend our campaigns.

The Barren Marriage of American Labour and the Democratic Party

On the eve of the New Deal's inauguration in the winter of 1933 the auto industry in Detroit was stunned by an energetic and well-planned walkout at the Briggs Auto plant.* Following three and a half years of nearly catastrophic unemployment and paralyzed inaction by the American Federation of Labor, the Briggs strike signaled the revival of industrial militancy. This 'Lexington and Concord of the auto rebellion,' as it was later typed, was fought for two demands that would be central in most early New Deal strikes: company recognition of rank and file controlled shop committees and the limitation of the authority of foremen and line supervisors.¹

Seventeen years later, and in the wake of hundreds of local strikes as well as two nationwide walkouts (1937 and 1946), the United Auto Workers signed the so-called 'Treaty of Detroit' with General Motors. The 1950 contract with its five-year no-strike pledge symbolized the end of the long New Deal/Fair Deal cycle of class struggle and established the model of collective bargaining which

has prevailed for the past quarter century. On one hand, the contract conceded the permanence of union representation and provided for the periodic increase of wages and benefits tied to productivity growth. On the other hand, the contract—by affirming the inviolability of managerial prerogatives, by relinquishing worker protection against technological change, and by ensnaring grievance procedure in a bureaucratic maze—also liquidated precisely that concern for rank and file power in the immediate labour process that had been the central axis of the original 1933–37 upsurge in auto and other mass production industries. As *Forshaw* slyly put it at the time: ‘GM may have paid a billion for peace. . . . It got a bargain.’²

The long route from the informal shop-floor democracy of the first Briggs strike to the boardroom wheeling-dealing of the 1950 settlement, and the corresponding dilution and displacement of rank and file demands which was entailed, has usually been ascribed to the gradual bureaucratization of the new industrial unions. This transformation was accelerated, it has been argued, by wartime government intervention, and consolidated with the final metamorphosis of formerly militant labor leaders into the postwar era’s ‘new men of power.’³ Whether emphasis is placed on the repression of the labour left or simply the operation of a Michelsian ‘iron law of oligarchy,’ the triumph of bureaucratism has usually been seen as the determinant event in the dissipation of activism at the base.

Obscured has been the deeper, less unilateral dialectic between the ossification of industrial unionism into a bureaucratic mould and the changing content and trajectory of mass militancy. The CIO was not, as it has often been popularly depicted, the product of a single, heroic upsurge of working class ardour. On the contrary, the new industrial unions were formed by highly uneven, discontinuous moments of mass organization which mobilized different strata of the proletariat. Furthermore, as I have tried to show in a preceding NLR article,⁴ the CIO was the heir to a contradictory legacy. On one hand it inherited the accumulated defeats of earlier eras: the deep divisions between sectors of the working class, the absence of a unifying nexus of common proletarian institutions, the obscurantism of Gompersian craft unionism, and the forced marriage between the Catholic working class and the Democratic Party. On the other hand, it received the unquenched fire lit by the Wobblies, and the Knights of Labor before them, which burned on in the small, but unbroken, cadres of revolutionary workers in unorganized mines and mills. It has been all too easy for the

* I wish to thank John Amsden, Perry Anderson, Bob Brenner, John Laslett, and Brigid Loughran for their helpful comments and suggestions.

¹ For the Briggs Strike see Roger Keeran, ‘Communists and Auto Workers,’ University of Wisconsin, PhD Thesis, 1974, pp. 102–15.

² *Fortune*, July 1950, p. 53. For an analysis of the 1950 GM contract see Frank Emspak, ‘The Break-Up of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), 1945–1950,’ University of Wisconsin, PhD Thesis, 1972, pp. 364–65.

³ For the earliest statements of this position see Harold Mitchell, ‘Union Structure and Democracy,’ *Enquiry*, January 1943, and C. Wright Mills, *New Men of Power*, New York 1948.

⁴ Mike Davis, ‘Why the U.S. Working Class is Different,’ NLR 123, September–October 1980.

contemporary American left, still obsessed by the intractable enigma and charisma of the thirties, to believe that the course of it all was pre-determined in the deep structures of American history. On the other hand, it has been easier still to believe that all was possible; that the working class of the thirties and forties, like the characters in a Clifford Odets play, were there waiting, in raw militancy and spontaneous class instinct, for the 'correct' revolutionary cue.

A more cautious arbitration of the CIO's conflicting possibilities and determinancies must focus on precisely this tension between the received conditions of its emergence and the new terrains opened up by the creative impudence of struggle. The inevitability of the bureaucratic incorporation of the new unions; the counter-potentials of mass radicalism and a labour party; these are questions which must be situated in relationship to the internal logic of the seventeen-year wave of class struggle from Briggs to the 'Treaty of Detroit.' The first step is to identify the key conjunctures in the history of the CIO which crystallized certain balances of forces while simultaneously annulling others. In fact four periods stand out clearly as integral, constitutive phases in the formation of the industrial unions:

1. THE FIRST UPSURGE, 1933-37: The original rebellion of the unorganized industrial proletariat, starting with the 1933 'NRA' strikes and culminating in the sidown 'fever' of winter/spring 1937. This was arguably the highwater mark of the class struggle in modern American history.

2. LABOUR'S CIVIL WAR (I), 1937-41: Beginning with the 'Roosevelt Recession' in the summer of 1937, the CIO's great offensive suddenly ground to a halt in the face of growing unemployment, renewed employer terrorism, and especially the increasingly effective competition of the class-collaborationist AFL.

3. THE SECOND UPSURGE, 1941-46: A second phase of CIO expansion with the defense-induced industrial recovery of late 1940 and early 1941. After a series of new mass strikes in 1941 (Ford, Goodyear, Bethlehem, and Allis-Chalmers), official trade union action was suspended for the sake of a wartime 'no-strike' pledge ameliorated by government-imposed unionization of war industries. This incipient statification of the industrial unions provoked an explosive wave of wildcat militancy through 1943-45 until the restoration of bureaucratic hegemony with the great 'safety-valve' strikes of 1946.

4. LABOUR'S CIVIL WAR (II), 1947-50: The postwar organizing strategy of the CIO (public employment, retail, 'Operation Dixie,' and so on) collapsed in midst of a new employer-state offensive (Taft-Hartley in 1947) coupled with Cold War bloodletting within the CIO itself—the purge of left-led unions, mass blacklisting, and wholesale intra-CIO raiding. The result was a new stagnation of CIO growth and further gains by the AFL.

In the argument which follows, I employ this periodization as a framework for attempting to reconstruct the internal dynamics of CIO

militancy in relation both to the actual and *potential* development of political consciousness within the industrial working class

I. From Briggs to Flint

The original period of the CIO's formation—1933–37—has been incomparably better studied than its wartime expansion; yet at the same time, the historiography of this heroic period has tended to become so encrusted with mythology and *idées fixes* that certain crucial features have become obscured. In particular there are three aspects of labour's 'great upheaval' which need to be set far more sharply in relief:

First, the majority of the militant base for the new unionism was provided by second-generation workers, sons and daughters of the 1900–1920 'new immigrants,' whose activation as trade unionists went hand in hand with their mobilization as the electoral bulwark of the New Deal. As Samuel Lubell has argued, 'the real revolutionary surge behind the New Deal lay in . . . (the) coupling of the depression with the rise of a new generation which had been malnourished on the congestion of our cities and the abuses of industrialism.'⁵ In 1930 there were twenty-five million of these second-generation Americans; together with their parents they constituted a third (forty million) of the white population and a majority of the working class. Although native-stock and Irish-origin leaders still tended to exercise a disproportionate weight in the general staffs of the unions and organizing drives, the CIO's early grassroots were the second-generation workers in the steel mills, anthracite mines, packinghouses, coke ovens, foundries, and auto assembly lines. Their relationship to the twenties boom was similar to that of black workers to the 'affluence' of the sixties: dazzled by the sights and smells of a banquet in which they were never allowed to participate. Occupationally frozen in semi-hereditary unskilled and menial slots, forced to bear the brunt of urban poverty and hard times, but no longer limited by their parents' language or peasant superstitions—this second generation was ripe for rebellion.

Secondly, when the industrial uprising finally began in 1933 it was not primarily concerned with wages or even working hours. Indeed, the underlying thrust was surprisingly non-economistic; in a majority of cases the fundamental grievance was the petty despotism of the workplace incarnated in the capricious power of the foremen and the inhuman pressures of mechanized production lines. It must be recalled that in 1933 the typical American factory was a miniature feudal state where streamlined technologies were combined with a naked brutality that was the envy of fascist labour ministers. In Ford's immense citadels at Dearborn and River Rouge, for example, security chief Harry Bennett's 'servicemen' openly terrorized and beat assembly workers for such transgressions of plant rules as talking to one another on the line. In the huge Goodyear complex at Akron the

⁵ Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics*, London 1952, p. 29.

majority of workers were pitted against a paramilitary 'flying squad' of company favourites and stoolpigeons. But the most totalitarian settings were undoubtedly the grim steel towns of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana—the 'little Siberias' of Aliquippa, Weirton, Steelton, Duquesne, and so on—where steel barons like Tom Girdler or Benjamin Fairless exercised untrammelled local dictatorships. As Mayor Crawford of Duquesne once put it, 'Jesus Christ couldn't speak in Duquesne for the American Federation of Labour.'⁶ Thus it is not surprising that the deepest impulse of the early industrial strikes was the fight for democratization at the workplace and civil liberties in company towns. In one of the few community-focused studies of the rise of the CIO, James McDonnell has shown how Buffalo industrial workers in the early thirties were preoccupied with the establishment of union contracts and seniority systems as restraints upon the unbridled power of management. This quest for a degree of workplace control took specific forms in different industries: in Buffalo steel mills, for example, the overriding grievance was the foreman-controlled hiring 'shape-up,' while for auto workers it was the indiscriminate speed-up on the assembly lines.⁷

Thirdly, this rebellion (even at first in the mines) owed nothing to the benevolent hand of John L. Lewis or other official leaders. In fact the most striking aspect of the early thirties insurgency was the defiant autonomy of (usually clandestine) plant committees from any of the official apparatuses. Liberal hagiography, with its attribution of a decisive progressive role to the paradoxical Lewis (in earlier and later reincarnations, the *bête noir* of the left) has traditionally confused matters by its need to see the formation of the CIO as a historic, unmitigated step forward in the 'march of trade unionism.' In maintaining this position, it has tended to confuse the process by which militancy developed at the base with the very different causation and interests involved in the internal crisis of the old AFL bureaucracy. To weigh events more accurately, we need to keep one crucial fact in mind: *the original Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) was an alliance of dissident trade union bureaucrats, with important financial resources and friends in high places, created for the purpose of capturing an already existent mass movement of industrial shop committees and rebel locals—a movement with dangerous embryonic proclivities toward an anti-Gompersian model of 'class struggle unionism.'*

A brief reprise of the emergence of the CIO may make it clearer why the intervention of the Lewis-Hillman wing of the AFL bureaucracy, supported by Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Perkins, was ultimately a greek gift to the rank and file movements involved.

The Rank and File Vanguard

Following the passage of the neo-corporatist National Recovery Act of 1933 (with its famous Section 7-A asserting, with a calculated ambiguity, the 'right of labor to representatives of its own choosing'),

⁶ J. Raymond Walsh, CIO: *Industrial Unionism in Action*, New York 1937, pp. 51-2.

⁷ James R. McDonnell, 'The Rise of the CIO in Buffalo, New York: 1936-42,' University of Wisconsin, PhD Thesis, 1970, pp. 35-46.

a wave of strikes broke out like summer lighting across the industrial heartland. With the exception of garment and coal-mining, where rank and file spontaneity was soon harnessed to the rebuilding of the power of established bureaucracies, the leadership of these 'NRA strikes' was provided by two species of unofficial vanguards.

On one hand, there were the implanted nuclei of revolutionary cadres, the most important of which were the Communist Party's factory cells, its separatist 'third period' unions affiliated to the Trade Union Unity League, and, perhaps most significantly, its Slavic, Finnish, Magyar, and Yiddish language federations and cultural organizations which gave it privileged access to the first and second-generation 'new immigrants'.⁸ There were also the much smaller, but locally important bands of Trotskyists, Wobblies, and American Workers' Party members ('Musteites') as well as the trade union membership of the old Socialist Party.

On the other hand, there were informal groupings of highly skilled workers who conserved and transmitted neo-syndicalist craft traditions of a more radical inflection than the AFL mainstream. Including highly paid machine makers and peripatetic maintenance technicians, this elite strata tended to be loosely supervised and, by virtue of their mobility or vantage point in the labour process of mass industry, were uniquely placed to provide leadership and coordination to the organizing efforts of operatives and line workers. Drastic wage-cutting in the late twenties, followed by the impact of the Depression, drove broad sections of this skilled aristocracy in mass production industry to reject the craft exclusivism and nativism which had proven so divisive in the industrial strikes of the 1909-1922 period. Instead groups of craftsmen played catalytic roles in the organization of the NRA strikes. The outstanding early representative of this insurgency of skilled workers against 'fordism' was the Detroit-based Mechanics' Educational Society of America (MESA), which was composed primarily (although not exclusively) of tool and die makers under the influence of British shop-stewardist traditions. In the fall of 1933 MESA, uniting with groups of semi-skilled workers, successfully struck contract tool and die shops in the Detroit area and created the first union beachhead in the auto industry.⁹

⁸ Communist Party membership almost doubled from 1933 to 1935 (14,000 to 27,000), but its real influence was greatly amplified by its radical public within the various ethnic communities. In 1930 the CP published no less than eight foreign language daily papers in Finnish, Yiddish, Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Hungarian, and German. Some historians have belaboured the overwhelmingly foreign-born composition of American Communism (90% at its founding in 1919, still 80% fifteen years later) as the reason for its alleged peripheralization, but this assessment must be balanced against the actual composition of the industrial working class itself. In 1933, for example, the factory proletariat was still 60% foreign-born or second-generation 'new immigrants.' If anything the Party's membership corresponded to the contemporary make-up of the class and gave it indisputable advantages over more 'Americanized' groups like the Musteites (American Workers' Party) who had great difficulty penetrating ethnic proletarian milieux. For statistics see Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, New York 1961.

⁹ On the seminal role of the 'autonomous worker' in the rise of the CIO see Ronald Schatz, 'Union Pioneers, the Founders of Local Unions at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1933-37,' *Journal of American History*, 66 (1979), esp. p. 395.

By late 1933 and early 1934 these advanced detachments of radicals and rebel craftsmen had begun to cement alliances with strategic groups of second-generation semi-skilled workers who, in turn, mobilized the hidden strengths of informal workgroups and ethnic networks. The enlarged shop committees sought further linkages with other plants in the same city or industry. This search for solidarity at both city-wide and industry levels produced a flood of new applications for AFL charters (forcing the CP to abandon its dual unions at the end of 1934) as well as a dramatic reinvigoration of somnolent city central labour councils. At the same time, this renaissance of unionism—David Brody considers this period to be the high point of mass participation in the labour movement¹⁰—posed an excruciating dilemma for the AFL's dominant rightwing troika of Hutchinson, Frey and Woll, and to the craft 'job trust' which they represented (respectively the construction, metal and printing trades). Their problem was finding a way of keeping control over the new unionism while simultaneously preventing its materialization into either of the two subversive forms traditionally opposed by the conservative craft bloc: mass industrial unions or their functional homologues, broadly inclusive and independent city labour movements. The Executive Council's solution was to force the new unionists into temporary 'federal locals' subject to future redistribution amongst craft internationals, and to invest dictatorial control over organizing campaigns in basic industry to 'expert' (inept and alcoholic) AFL functionaries appointed by President Green.

AFL Machinations

The entry of the AFL apparatus immediately acted as a dampening force upon the rank and file movements in industry. What the auto, rubber, steel, and electrical insurgents demanded was a militant plan of battle against the corporations which aimed at the earliest possible national walk-outs backed by the resources of the AFL. Green's plenipotentiaries, on the other hand, exercised every ounce of guile to derail the strike movements and to reach accommodations with management and the government. In auto, for example, the machinations of chief organizers Collins and Dillon, together with the AFL's acquiescence in an intolerably pro-employer formulation of the industry's NRA code, sparked an open revolt of the local shop committees who went ahead, under the influence of the left, to prepare the basis for an independent auto workers international. In rubber and electrical, similar ruptures took place between militant rank and filers and their appointed 'leaders.' In steel, however, the AFL's sabotage of the great 1933-34 movement for an industry-wide strike led to a more permanent demoralization as tens of thousands of grassroots millhands made an exodus from federal locals and Amalgamated lodges.

In the meantime the reformed ties of solidarity at a local level found explosive expression in the three successive city-wide strikes which rocked Toledo, Minneapolis and San Francisco in 1934. In each case

¹⁰ David Brody, 'Labor and the Great Depression: The Interpretative Prospects,' *Labor History*, 13 (Spring 1972), p. 242.

the struggle of a leading sector of local workers (auto, truckdrivers, and maritime) under the leadership of avowed revolutionaries (Mus-
steites, Trotskyists, and Communists) catalyzed massive and very
violent confrontations between labour and capital. The national AFL
responded to these upheavals with disclaimers and denunciations,
while Tobin of the Teamsters dispatched goons to strikebreak against
the radical drivers in Minneapolis.

Thus by the time that John L. Lewis got around to delivering his
legendary right-cross to Big Bill Hutchinson's chin at the 1935 AFL
convention—symbolically precipitating the exit of the future CIO
unions—broad sections of the industrial grassroots were already
either deeply alienated from the AFL leadership or in open revolt.
Even more ominously, there was a visible *radicalization* of the rank and
file movement expressed both by the growth of left-wing groups, and,
especially, by their ability to lead masses of workers in broad struggles
like the 1934 strikes. Moreover, the left's capacity to act as an alter-
native pole of leadership was greatly enhanced by the de facto indus-
trial united front between the Communists and Socialists which
emerged in 1935 and lasted, at least in auto, until March or April of
1937.¹¹ Although this brief season of left unity was only a passing
fancy of the Communists (then en route from the sectarianism of the
third period to the sycophancy of the popular front), it was a vital
factor in the next and most dramatic phase of the rebellion in industry:
the sitdown wave of 1936-37.

Sitdown Fever

In the year between the summers of 1936 and 1937, the shop committees
in auto, rubber, and electrical—along with kindred rank and file
movements in maritime—launched a sustained offensive which was
quite unequalled in American history for its tactical creativity as
well as its demonstration of the power of the collective worker in
modern industry. By uniting the skilled and unskilled, the native and
the foreign-born, these strikes 'created a solidarity that hitherto
eluded American workers.'¹² At the root of the success of this strike
wave, which breached for the first time the main bastions of capital
(General Motors, us Steel, General Electric, and Chrysler), were two
invaluable resources. One was the recovery, or, perhaps, reinvention,
of those radical tactics based on rank and file solidarity and initiative
which the Wobblies had pioneered in the previous generation: the sit-
down strike and the mass picket. The other crucial variable was the
quality of strategic leadership and inter-plant coordination which was
supplied by the left, particularly the Communists. Unlike the top-down
generalship which unfortunately became all too typical of the CP's
trade union 'influentials' after 1938, the Communist strike leaders of
1936-37 (Mortimer and Travis in auto, Emspak in electrical, and so on)
were genuine tribunes of the rank and file who worked with relentless

¹¹ On this ephemeral united front, cf. Joseph Starobin, *American Communism in
Crisis: 1943-57*, Princeton 1977, p. 38; and Staughton Lynd, 'The United Front in
America: A Note,' *Radical America*, 8 (July-August 1974).

¹² Melvyn Dubofsky, 'Not So "Turbulent Years": Another Look at the American
Thirties,' *American Studies*, 24, 1, p. 8.

energy to expand and deepen mass participation in strike organization. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to claim that a fecund synthesis was temporarily achieved between the highly participationist and egalitarian tradition of struggle derived from the Wobblies, and some of the best elements of American Leninism's emphasis on organization, discipline, and strategy.¹³

The results were staggering: an epidemic of sitdown strikes beginning in rubber in 1936, then taken up by the autoworkers in their epic GM strike of winter 1937, and finally exploding in the spring fever of 1937 as some 400,000 workers staged 477 sitdowns.¹⁴ Mighty corporations seemed to fall like dominoes before such prodigies of rank and file energy as the ingenious capture of 'Fisher Number Four' or the eleven mile long picket line at -9° which the rubber workers staged at the Goodyear complex in 1936. By directly encroaching upon the sanctity of corporate property and by providing workers with a premonitory revelation of their collective power, the sitdowns seemed to be transforming proletarian consciousness and dissolving old indoctrinations. Social surveys amongst militant rubber workers in Akron, for example, showed a 'distressing' absence of respect for corporate property as well as the strength of a group ethos which valued human rights over property rights.

The goal of the secessionist bureaucrats led by Lewis and Hillman was to dam this torrent of mass militancy and to rechannel it into pacific tributaries under their command. Their model of industrial unionism was Lewis' own United Mine Workers (UMW) which banned radicals and whose constitution provided for 'tight central control, limited local autonomy, and minimized rank and file participation.'¹⁵ Where prior industry-wide organization of shop committees or union nuclei was lacking, as in steel and meatpacking, this was exactly the structure which was imposed. Both the Steel and Packinghouse Workers' Organizing Committees (SWOC and PWOC) were strictly top-down operations, headed by handpicked lieutenants of Lewis from the UMW who supplanted existing local leadership. As Bert Cochran has observed, 'there were no conventions, no elections, no autonomous locals or districts.'¹⁶ In the industries where such a coup de main was impossible (i.e. where some coalesced national framework already existed: auto, rubber, electrical, and oil) Lewis created a dual structure

¹³ Unfortunately this 'synthesis' was only achieved temporarily on a practical plane; no important attempt was made to theorize the lessons of the sitdowns or to strategically appreciate the importance of defending the autonomy and democracy of the shop committees. In an interesting contrast between the early CIO and the British shop stewards' movements of the First World War, David Brody points to the absence in the thirties of a sustaining 'syndicalist' ideology concerned with problems of workers' control or functional shop leadership. See David Brody, 'Labor History and Rank and File Militancy,' *Labor History*, 16 (Winter 1975).

¹⁴ In 1937 sitdowns included hospital workers, trash collectors, grave diggers, blind workers, engineers, prisoners, tenants, students, and baseball players. The fundamental study is Sidney Fine, *Sitdowns*, Ann Arbor 1969; while an interesting New Left evocation of the experience is Jeremy Brecher, *The Sitdown Strikes of the 1930s*, Root and Branch Pamphlet No. 4, Charlestown (Mass.) 1972.

¹⁵ Lorin Lee Cary, 'Institutionalized Conservatism in the Early CIO. Adolf Germer, A Case Study,' *Labor History*, 12 (Fall, 1972), p. 494.

¹⁶ Bert Cochran, *Labor and Capitalism*, Princeton 1977, pp. 100-01.

of field representatives and regional directors. The CIO staff worked hand in hand with New Deal officials to promote 'responsible' negotiated settlements and to suppress the rampant use of the sitdown strike. It was ironically Adolf Germer, the former leader of the socialist opposition in the UMW, whom Lewis entrusted with the mission of squelching the sitdowns soon after their first outbreak in Akron at the end of March 1936. With the collaboration of the Department of Labor, Germer tried to end the strike, but the rank and file, already soured by its earlier experiences with AFL organizers, 'remained suspicious of all but their own local union officers,' and shouted Germer down at a mass meeting.¹⁷ After a few more trying months in Akron, Germer followed the sitdown epidemic to Detroit where he was the highest ranking CIO representative at hand for the beginning of the historic General Motors strike. Bypassing Germer's objections and his petty obstructionism, however, the Socialist and Communist leadership at Flint and Cleveland forced the GM showdown upon Lewis as a virtual fait accompli.

Taming the Rank and File

The success of the rank and file leadership in retaining its autonomy and initiative during the Flint strike contrasts with what happened a few months later. By March 1937 Lewis was able to abort a repeat attempt of the GM sitdowns at Chrysler, foiled a proposed general strike in Detroit, and, by the end of the spring, brought the sitdown wave to a halt. Although the onslaught of a second depression in summer 1937 helped dampen mass militancy, other more directly political factors contributed to the sharp decline of strike momentum and the assertion of greater control by the CIO bureaucracy. First Lewis commanded indispensable financial resources drawn from the treasury of the UMW—a decisive advantage over the relatively impoverished federations of shop committees. Secondly, and more importantly, the secession of the CIO leadership from the AFL coincided with a fateful recomposition of Roosevelt's political coalition that favoured a new collusion between the state and the industrial unions. Until the middle of 1935 FDR had managed to draw support both from the majority of the unions and from the so-called 'progressive' wing of capital (advocates of greater corporatism, including the management of GE, US Steel, the Rockefeller oil interests, and even the President of the US Chamber of Commerce). He balanced this conflictual alliance by offering the AFL a more or less pro-union interpretation of NRA codes in lighter (and Northern) industries as well as more energetic relief measures; to big business, on the other hand, he ceded an interpretation of the NRA codes in heavy industry which—as we have seen in the cases of steel and auto—buttressed the 'company unions' which had been thrown up as roadblocks to genuine organization.¹⁸ This political juggling act worked for a while, but as the rank and file insurgency in the plants continued to grow regardless of the codes, corporate capital began to re-evaluate its support for the New Deal. It was this mass desertion of business from the administration in

¹⁷ Cary, p. 494.

¹⁸ For a contemporary analysis see Louis F. Budenz, 'After the Strike—What?', *Common Sense*, September 1935, p. 10.

1935 that drove a *reluctant* Roosevelt temporarily into the arms of Lewis and the CIO insurgents. With an attenuated base of business support (now primarily composed of anti-Wall Street segments of Western and Southern entrepreneurs), Roosevelt needed the powerful electoral bulwark that the surge of four million workers into the CIO during 1935-37 offered. Lewis and Hillman, in turn, needed the charisma of Roosevelt's backing and the clout of his political-judicial support to bring the rank and file in line. Thus, in the brief halcyon days of Roosevelt's and Lewis's relationship in 1936, the CIO created Labor's Nonpartisan League (LNPL) to mobilize support for Roosevelt and help make up the deficit in campaign financing left by the defection of Democratic bankers and businessmen. Roosevelt reciprocated by allowing the pro-CIO liberals in the Labor Department and the National Labor Relations Board to provide the new unions with tacit support.

At the same time it is highly unlikely that Lewis and Hillman could have so easily consolidated their control without aid from a third source, the Communist Party. Almost immediately after the stunning victory at Flint, the CP began to discard the residue of its working relationship with the Socialists and turn towards a new alliance with Lewis (and later, after Lewis's resignation in 1940, with Murray and Hillman). Again it was a coldblooded marriage of convenience: the bureaucratic integration of the CIO would be an incomparably easier matter with Communist complicity and Lewis also needed the kind of superb organizing talent which they seemed to possess in abundance. On the other side, the CP's turn toward Lewis, under the rising star of Earl Browder, was a logical part of a broader manoeuvre to legitimize the Communists as the left-wing of the New Deal coalition. In time they would have to pay a terrible price at the hands of their erstwhile allies for this 'centre-left coalition'. Meanwhile the Party's work in the unions began to take on a totally new character as the exigencies of intra-bureaucratic struggle acquired priority over the defense of rank and file democracy or the creation of a mass socialist current in the unions. Communist criticism of Lewis (and later of Murray) ceased, the call for an independent labour party was muted, and by 1938 the party's factory cells and plant papers were abolished.¹⁹

¹⁹ Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis*, p. 36; and Emspak, 'The Break-Up of the CIO,' p. 49. After the war leading CP trade union strategists underwent bitter self-criticism for their failure to sustain the Party's influence within the CIO rank and file. Thus trade union secretary Roy Hudson was forced to admit that the CP had disastrously underemphasized union democracy for the sake of supporting Murray and Hillman, while electrical workers' leader Dave Davis confessed that even the CP-led unions were infected by 'rampant bureaucratism.' In a more recent memoir, John Williamson—a principal architect of the CP's strategy of the 'left-centre coalition' within the CIO—outlined what he believed were the Party's three fundamental errors: (1) failure to build socialist consciousness in the unions; (2) failure to keep building a CP mass base in the unions; and (3) failure to build a left current within the AFL. Furthermore he observed that it was the weakness of the CP's implantation in the trade union rank and file that ultimately made the Party so vulnerable to McCarthyite persecution. (Cf. Roy Hudson in *Political Affairs*, 24 (July 1945), p. 605; Dave Davis cited in Starobin, *American Communism*, pp. 96-8; and John Williamson, *Dangerous Scot*, New York 1969, p. 156.)

The Debacle in 'Little Steel'

The full import of these new alignments was revealed in the organization of the campaign against hold-out 'Little Steel' in 1937. The Communists contributed at least a third of the organizers for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), but abstained from attempts at recruitment or at criticism of the autocratic Lewis-Murray leadership, even when, at the end of the campaign, all Party members were summarily purged from the staff.²⁰ Tactically conservative and determined to keep a tight rein on local strike committees, SWOC eschewed sitdowns and prepared for a long, conventional walkout. This played into the hands of the shrewd and ruthless Tom Girdler, generalissimo of the Little Steel employers, who launched a preemptive lockout, barricading forces of scabs and heavily armed company guards inside the mills. Girdler's 'reverse sitdowns' were reinforced with a recipe of massive antiunion propaganda, middle class vigilantes, and terrorism against picket lines drawn from the so-called 'Mohawk Valley Formula' (after the strategy which Remington Rand Corporation had used to defeat the CIO in upstate New York). Lewis, in turn, counted on FDR and New Deal state officials (newly elected with the backing of LNPL) to overcome the steel barons' systematic and blatant defiance of the Wagner Act of 1935. Thus when Democratic Governor Davey of Ohio sent the national guard into the steel towns of Canton, Massillon, and Youngstown, they were welcomed as 'brotherly heroes' by the SWOC strikers. Instead the guardsmen launched a reign of terror, reminiscent of the suppression of the 1919 Steel Strike, which virtually drove SWOC underground in Ohio. Meanwhile, the even more 'pro-labour' Governor Earl of Pennsylvania, who in earlier months had genuinely supported the CIO's fight to establish civil liberties in the Allegheny and Monongahela valleys, also backtracked into a repressive stance. The key to the behaviour of these Democratic politicians, of course, was the attitude of the administration in Washington. Roosevelt, shifting ground to rebuild support from business circles as well as with the anti-CIO leadership of the AFL, cynically repaid his electoral debts to the CIO by playing the role of Pontius Pilate in the aftermath of the bloody Memorial Day (1938) massacre of striking steelworkers in South Chicago. While Lewis was busy defusing the rank and file anger inside SWOC which was pushing for a general strike in Chicago, FDR, declared 'a plague on both houses' and coolly distanced himself from the CIO. The combined result, therefore, of Lewis's bureaucratism, the CP's new-found moderation, and FDR's betrayal was the defeat of SWOC and the crashing halt of the CIO's offensive in industry.²¹

II. The Labour Party That Never Was

The awakening of class solidarity that welded together industrial workers in the struggle for unionization was replicated on an electoral plane as a tendential political unity of working class constituencies

²⁰ Cochran, *Labor and Communism*, pp. 100-01.

²¹ Cf. Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, New York 1964, 67-71; J.B. Widick, 'Question of Trade Union Unity,' *New Internationalist*, January 1938, p. 15; and Walsh, CIO, p. 181.

previously fragmented by religious and racial division. The New Deal landslide victory of 1936 marked, for the first time, the supersession of the traditional ethno-religious patterning of the Northern electorate by a clear polarization of workers and capitalists between the Democratic and Republican parties. This political recomposition was primarily a product of the rise of a second-generation ethnic-proletarian voting bloc augmented by the conversion of formerly Republican blacks and many native Protestant workers.²² A contradictory double movement was involved in this realignment of political axes: on one hand, as an expansion of the Democratic Party's active base, it contributed to a spectacular reinforcement of capitalist political hegemony; on the other hand, to the extent that it tended to politically unify the working class, it created new potentials for eventually undermining this same bourgeois party duopoly.

While conventional political history has stressed the irresistible tide of the first movement, the contemporary left of the thirties, dubious of the New Deal's capacity to cure the ills of American capitalism, was much more impressed with the opportunities created by the second. It was the consensus of the left that the rise of the CIO was finally producing, where the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World had failed, the successful cellular structure and strategic imperative for a labour party. Indeed the emergence of the new industrial unions, while largely buttressing the Democrats, also coincided with a dramatic ferment of alternative political movements and labour-oriented third parties. In Minnesota, for example, the 'radical' Farmer-Labor Party consolidated its dominance in 1934-36 with the election of a Governor and two US Senators, while in Washington and Oregon the labour-based Commonwealth Federations (emulations of the social-democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Party of Canada) captured their state Democratic Parties for several years. Meanwhile in California Upton Sinclair's 'EPIC' movement promised to redistribute the wealth, and in Wisconsin the La Follette dynasty continued its reign through the powerful Progressive Party (later fused with the state's farmer-labour movement).²³ Simultaneously the surge of industrial unionism, confronted with the challenge of corporate and state

²² See Kristi Andersen, *The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928-1936*, Chicago 1980.

²³ The Progressive Congressman from Wisconsin, Thomas R. Amlie, was the sparkplug of efforts in 1934-36 to unite all the third-party currents into a single movement preparatory to the launching of a new national party in 1936 or 1940. Under the successive titles of the 'League for Independent Political Action,' the 'National Farmer-Labor Party Federation,' and finally the 'American Commonwealth Federation' (ACF), Amlie, John Dewey, Paul Douglas and other 'progressive liberals' tried to win the adhesion of innumerable farm organizations, trade unions, and statewide third parties to their program of 'production for use.' At its inaugural conference in Chicago in 1935, the ACF, backed by numerous groups including the garment and textile workers' unions, predicted it would win five to ten million votes in the 1936 elections and the presidency itself by 1940. Unfortunately the linchpin of its entire strategy was the sponsorship of the powerful Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, and when FLF Governor Olson threw his support to FDR and the Democrats in 1936, it squelched the national hopes of the ACF. Cf. Selden Rodman, 'A Third Party by March?' *Common Sense*, January 1935, pp. 17-8; Thomas R. Amlie, 'The American Commonwealth Federation: "What Chance in 1936?"', *Common Sense*, August 1935, pp. 6-9; and Millard Gleason, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative*, Minneapolis 1979, pp. 206-8, 220-21, and 244.

repression, became unavoidably politicised. In 'feudal' steel towns, as we have seen, political mobilization for democratic rights was a virtual precondition for union organization. Similarly in auto centers, the sitdown strikes spurred UAW militants to campaign against corporation-dominated local governments. In Lansing and Jackson, Michigan, for example, UAW 'flying squads' did double duty on picket lines and ballot counting, while in Flint and Saginaw the union stewards were also organized on a residential basis, creating a powerful ward organization. Local after local of the auto, electrical and garment workers voted support for the concept of a labour party in a groundswell of political independence that discomforted Lewis and Hillman. A Gallup Poll conducted in August, 1937, following the sitdown wave, showed that at least 21% of the population supported the eventual formation of a national farmer-labour party.²⁴

Why, then, did this convergence of politicised trade union militancy and third party experimentation fail again—as in 1894 and 1919²⁵—to produce any lasting synthesis? Two interrelated explanations have been advanced. One is that the 'leftward' turn of the New Deal in 1935 stole the thunder and coopted the popular *raison d'être* of the insurgent political movements. The other is that, contrary to the strike-breaking of Cleveland and Wilson, Roosevelt's tacit support for the CIO in 1936–37 allowed him to appear as the saviour of industrial unionism. Both of these explanations have obvious kernels of truth. There can be no doubt, for instance, that the broad reforms of FDR's 'second hundred days' in 1935 constituted a powerful gravitational force which attracted contemporary radicalism much closer to the orbit of the Democratic Party. One example was the increasingly intimate alliance between the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party—supposedly the main stalking-horse of a national third party—and the New Deal. Another was the unprecedented creation of the American Labor Party in order to channel New York's significant radical vote toward support of the regime in power (FDR and Mayor La Guardia). Even Labor's Nonpartisan League, nominally the independent political expression of the CIO, was little more than a captive campaign apparatus for Roosevelt and selected pro-labour Democrats. Finally, in regard to the use of the state's coercive apparatus, Staughton Lynd is unquestionably correct to emphasize the shrewdness of Roosevelt's strategy of deradicalizing the sitdown wave through sympathetic federal mediation rather than through the draconic presidential repression that had been the ultimate policy of previous administrations.²⁶

The Crisis of the New Deal

But this line of analysis loses much of its cogency when it is generalized beyond the immediate conjuncture of 1935–37 and the honeymoon of FDR and the CIO. The satellization of the LNPL and the

²⁴ Donald R. McCoy, 'The National Progressives of America, 1938,' *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIV (June 1957), p. 76.

²⁵ See Davis, 'Why the US Working Class is Different,' *NLA* 123, pp. 32–35, 43–45.

²⁶ Lynd, 'The United Front,' pp. 30–31.

farmer-labour movements, for example, was emphatically not the same as their actual absorption into the Democratic Party, and most contemporary Marxists, counting on the crisis of the New Deal and the eventual replacement of Roosevelt from the right, still visualised them as the foci of a future realignment to the left (1940 was the popularly predicted date). Indeed it was precisely such a crisis of reform which ensued in mid-1937 with the onset of the second slump and the increasing defiance of the National Labor Relations Board by an intransigent sector of capital (Ford, Dupont, Little Steel, and so on). Roosevelt's attempts at shoring up the New Deal with an exemplary 'purge' of congressional reactionaries and his strategy of packing the Supreme Court were both dramatic failures; and in 1938, following the decimation of liberals in the fall elections, a resurgent bloc of Republicans and 'Bourbon' Southern Democrats actually took control of Congress away from New Deal liberals. This shift in the national political balance, combined with FDR's overriding desire to win support for an increasingly interventionist foreign policy, preempted further reform initiatives or new concessions to labour. More than that, it led to a drastic cut in public relief in 1939 (which sparked widespread strikes and riots) and, as we have seen, renewed state repression of strikes and organizing drives. Lynd's belief that the CIO never experienced the 'stage of radicalizing confrontation with state power' must certainly be qualified by the widespread strike-breaking of New Deal governors, exemplified in the terrorization of the SWOC in late 1937.²⁷

Thus by 1937-39 the crucial integrative props of Rooseveltian Democracy—economic restoration, social reformism, and suspension of state repression—were openly in crisis and seemingly propitious conditions again existed for the further growth of local labour or farmer-labour movements and their eventual national coalescence. It has, in fact, been the traditional view of certain Marxist currents that 1938 was the most advantageous opportunity for revolutionary politics in the twentieth century. The puzzle, however, is how to explain why 1938 was actually a year of unmitigated disaster for third party and labour party hopes, which instead of growing at the expense of the New Deal's crisis, virtually collapsed. In Wisconsin and Minnesota, for example, the Progressive and Farmer-Labor Parties suffered the devastating losses of both governorships and a reduction in their combined congressional delegations from twelve to four. In Washington the Commonwealth Federation was dislodged from its command of the state Democratic Party, and in California the EPIC movement quietly disappeared from the scene. Meanwhile the UAW's 'Vote Labor' campaign in the Detroit municipal elections of 1937—the CIO's most ambitious foray into local politics—lost by a surprising margin ('100,000 and 200,000 workers who are registered voters did not

²⁷ The unleashing of the national guard against SWOC was merely the climax of five years of repressive attacks by Democratic state governors. In 1934, for example, a national textile workers strike was broken by a massive mobilization of guardsmen from Rhode Island to Georgia. In 1935 alone the militia was employed in 73 strikes in 20 states, 'a majority of them under Democratic "New Deal" administrations.' Needless to say Roosevelt made no attempt to use his executive powers to curb strike-breaking by his local allies and supporters. See Preis, *Labor's Glorious Step*, p. 96.

vote'), while the LNPL's desultory performance in the 1938 elections cast doubt on its continued viability.²⁸

The AFL Resurgence

The key to this paradox of declining third party fortunes was the veritable 'civil war' which broke out between the AFL and the new unions in 1937-38. It was not just a question of labor disunity, but rather of an extraordinary resurgence of right-wing trade unionism allied in informal, but decisive ways with the contemporary offensive of capital. On a local level the AFL colluded with employers to preempt CIO organizing drives by the signing of toothless, 'sweetheart' contracts or even the chartering of company unions. At the same time the national AFL Executive, long anxious to tame the power of central labour councils, ordered a thorough purge of the CIO from local labour bodies. In a postmortem on the failure of SWOC, J. B. Widick blamed AFL President Green for splitting strategic central labour councils in Detroit, Cleveland, and Akron 'precisely when labor solidarity was indispensable to prevent the "Little Steel" defeat from turning into a rout.'²⁹ On the West Coast the AFL Teamsters countered the CIO's famous 'March Inland' from its waterfront base with a wave of violence and secret agreements with employers. Even bloodier guerrilla warfare erupted on the New Orleans' docks between AFL and CIO longshoremen, while Southern open-shop supporters gleefully circulated the AFL's red-baiting diatribes against the industrial unions.³⁰

The strange bedfellows of the AFL and big business also cooperated on a political plane to defend their collusive contract-making by demanding the amendment of the Wagner Act to 'guarantee to the employer "free speech" to express his union preference.' This dangerous attempt to re-legalize company unionism was typical of an AFL strategy which in its frenzy to stop the growth of the CIO at any price, proved more Pyrrhic than Machiavellian. The AFL's political endorsement policy as adopted by its 1937 convention, for instance, placed it in opposition to any candidate sympathetic to the CIO.³¹ By thus splitting the labour vote, the AFL effectively undermined the base of state third-party movements, city-wide labour tickets, and the left wing of the New Deal. In 1938 the AFL withdrew from the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, the Oregon Commonwealth Federation, and the New York

²⁸ Cf. Hugh T. Lovin, 'The Fall of Farmer-Labor Parties, 1936-38,' *Pacific North-West Quarterly* 62 (January 1971); Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism*, p. 272; George Tselos, 'The Minneapolis Labor Movement in the 1930s,' University of Minnesota, PhD Thesis, 1970, pp. 418-34, 471-79; and Ben Fischer, 'The Lessons of Detroit's Labor Campaign,' *Socialist Review*, January-February 1938, p. 17.

²⁹ Widick, 'Question of Trade Union Unity', p. 15.

³⁰ Frey, for example, publicly claimed that 'the CIO policy was determined in the headquarters of the Communist Party in Moscow,' while the anti-semitic Wharton (Machinists) characterized his opponents as '... Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Howard and their gang of sluggers, communists, radicals, and soap box artists, professional bums, expelled members of labor unions, outright scabs and the Jewish organizations with all their red affiliates.' Walsh, CIO, p. 215.

³¹ Cf. Herbert Harris and David Denson, 'Is Green Digging Labor's Grave?', *Common Sense*, February 1940, pp. 4-5. Many liberal congressmen also blamed the AFL for the first two defeats of the Fair Labor Standards Act. See William H. Riker, 'The CIO in Politics, 1936-40,' Harvard, PhD Thesis, 1948, pp. 106-7.

American Labor Party, as well as severing its remaining links with Labor's Nonpartisan League. Simultaneously the AFL worked to defeat Mineworkers' leader Tom Kennedy in his gubernatorial bid in Pennsylvania and radical congressman Maury Maverick in Texas. (In some cases, however, the AFL's endorsements were so odious—as in the case of Green's support for right-wing Governor Merriam in California—that its local affiliates rebelled and temporarily united with CIO unions.)

Thus the AFL's fratricidal mania was self-destructive to the extent that it undermined the political leverage of the entire labour bureaucracy on the eve of World War Two. As we shall see later, labour's disunity precluded the negotiation of the kind of 'tripartite' political participation in the war economy which Gompers had partially achieved during World War One and which the British Labour Party won after 1942. At the same time, however, the AFL did manage to grow rather spectacularly in the late thirties, and by 1940 had recouped most of its membership and financial losses from the CIO schism. Although part of this growth was built on the flimsy support of sweetheart unionism, another part reflected the re-emergence of militancy in the ranks of the AFL itself. Unlike the strike movements in mass production industry, however, the new combativity of the AFL lacked a broad resonance since it was constrained within a narrow and tightly controlled economism. Faced with the CIO challenge, the larger AFL unions like the Machinists, Carpenters, Meatcutters, and Teamsters launched new organizing campaigns and adopted quasi-industrial structures and jurisdictions.³² But these membership drives failed to generate the sustained rank and file activism that accompanied the emergence of industrial unions like the UAW. Indeed the modernization of the AFL after 1937 took place through an enlargement and recomposition of the bureaucracy itself; a process typified by the rise of young turks like Jimmy Hoffa in the Teamsters who gave old-fashioned business unionism a new aggressiveness (with tactics borrowed from radicals or the CIO) without changing one atom of its social and political conservatism.

It would be mistaken to assume, however, that the rightward and divisive posture of the AFL in the late thirties was exclusively the result of its ossified bureaucracy defending its traditional sinecures. Equally important was the fact that the ancien régime ultimately drew its solidity from the relative conservatism of its predominantly skilled, native-Protestant and 'old immigrant' membership. It was, moreover, precisely this stratum of the working class which was most susceptible to the ideological and cultural pressures of the petty bourgeoisie. The relative social gravity of the middle strata and the degree of permeability between its lower levels and the upper sections of the working class have both been unusually high in the United States—perhaps higher than in any other industrial country. An adequate theoretical

³² Brody believes that 'in the long run, adaptive old-line unions such as the Teamsters and the Butcher Workmen, once they had come under the stimulus of the events of the Great Depression proved to be more effective vehicles for expansion than the militant industrial unions.' David Brody, 'Labor and the Great Depression,' p. 237.

approach to the history of labour in the thirties would have to chart the course of the various movements and perturbations of the different middle strata and their mediating impact upon the development of working class consciousness (and vice versa). Suffice to say, that while middle-class insurgencies of the first Roosevelt administration tended in a generally 'populist' direction which politically buttressed the New Deal, after 1937 there was a profound middle-class counter-reaction to the CIO and the growth of the left.³³ This anti-CIO, anti-radical backlash, incessantly fanned by the press and the corporate media, contributed to the retrenchment of the AFL bureaucracy and provided it with a broad patriotic sanction for opposing the new industrial unions. At the same time the resurgence of the AFL in the context of the rightward shift in national politics put the CIO leadership under increasing pressure; especially after the Ladies Garment Workers and the Millners unions rejoined the AFL in 1940 in protest at the dominant 'centre-left' alliance within the CIO. Under seige, Lewis and Hillman clung even more desperately to their links to Roosevelt and the shrunken liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

The 'Americanization' of the Communist Party

Increasingly uncritical support for Roosevelt also came from the Communist Party which, decked out in its new image as 'twentieth century Americanism,' took popular-frontism to such extremes as the endorsement of the Kelly-Nash machine in Chicago, which was directly responsible for the 1937 massacre of steel strikers, and of the infamous, anti-union regime of Boss Hague in New Jersey. The sychophantic policies of the Communists did little, however, to broaden their base in the industrial working class. Although the party reached the zenith of its popular influence in this period, with perhaps 75,000 members and a periphery of more than 500,000, a majority of its growth came from an influx of second-generation, Jewish white-collar and professional workers. Thus between 1935 and 1941 the non-blue collar component of party membership jumped from barely 5% to almost 45%, while the New York component more than doubled from 22.5% to nearly 50%.³⁴ As Nathan Glazer has pointed out in his study of the party's changing social composition: 'During the thirties the party was transformed from a largely working-class organization to one that was half middle-class. . . even though the party had increased five-fold since the late twenties, there had been no such increase in the cadres in important industries. The party strength in the unions—

³³ The repudiation of the New Deal by the middle classes was in part a reaction to the stirrings of protest after the 1936-37 victories in the most submerged sections of the working class: women, blacks, service and retail workers, employees of small business, and farm labour. Particularly dramatic was the collapse of the Rooseveltian farm alliance in the late thirties; an event not unrelated to widespread processing and trucking strikes as well as to the CIO's attempts to organize field hands. Ironically the New Deal's own agricultural policies, which favoured planters and large farmers, produced a political frankenstein in the form of the immensely powerful and militantly anti-liberal Farm Bureau Federation. The Bureau, which enjoyed governmental sponsorship through the Agriculture Department's Extension Service, became the organizer of rural resistance to New Deal policies and played a major role in bringing about the conservative congressional victories of 1938 and 1942.

³⁴ Glazer, *American Communism*, pp. 114, 116.

except for maritime and longshore and the white-collar unions—was not a mass-membership strength. It was based on organizational control.’³⁵ While the Communist Party was undergoing this paradoxical process of simultaneous growth and relative ‘deproletarianization,’ the rest of the left was near collapse. The Socialist Party, unable as always to give its trade union interventions any strategy or coherent leadership, virtually disintegrated in a series of factional splits and defections after 1936, while the Trotskyists were seriously weakened by major doctrinal schisms in 1940. The curious result was to give the CP a resonance in national politics and a hegemony on the left which was quite unequaled since the heyday of the old Socialist Party in 1910–12, while at the same time the party was becoming more detached from strong roots in the newly-unionized industrial working class.

FDR Represses the Left

The weakness of the labour-left as a mass ideological current, and its dangerous over-dependence on bureaucratic alliances with ‘centre’ forces, was vividly demonstrated by the Roosevelt Administration’s success in repressing and isolating CIO radicals on the eve of the 1940–41 rearmament boom. First, with the active support of the Minneapolis employers, President Tobin of the Teamsters (the most outstanding AFL Democrat and friend of FDR) cashed in his political debts with the White House and obtained massive federal sedition prosecution of the Trotskyist leadership of Drivers’ Local 544—the nerve-centre of labour militancy in the Northwest. (Ironically the Communists, who would later be decimated by the Smith Act, supported its initial application against their Trotskyist factional opponents in Minneapolis.) Then, in the summer of 1941, the Communists were evicted from the strategic aircraft industry after Roosevelt ordered the Army to break the North American Aviation strike (Inglewood, California) led by Wyndham Mortimer, the hero of the 1936–37 Flint strike. *Here was the ostensible ‘Pullman’ of the New Deal: federal bayonets versus twelve thousand militant rank and file workers.* But unlike the Pullman Strike of 1894 there was neither massive national solidarity with the blacklisted workers nor any political break with the administration. Instead the CIO leadership (Murray and Hillman since the resignation of Lewis in 1940) eagerly collaborated with Roosevelt’s strike-breaking in the dual hope of weakening the Communists within the CIO while simultaneously gaining administration support for the ‘top-down’ unionization of the defense industry. The Communists, for their part, mounted only a desultory campaign of defense; their temporary tangent of militancy since 1939 was broken by the invasion of Russia and the party returned to virtually uncritical adulation of Roosevelt and Murray in the fall of 1941.

III. WWII: Wildcats and Hate Strikes

After nearly four years of trying to hold the fort against the attacks of employers and the rival AFL, the CIO regained the initiative in 1941.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ CIO membership doubled in 1937 in the wake of the sitdowns and again in 1941

As industrial production revived under the stimulus of Lendlease and rearmament, previously organized workers struck on a broad front for the first wage increases since 1937. Leading the way were Lewis' indomitable mine workers whose solidarity and tenacity in successive strikes was probably unexcelled in American history. Striking in direct defiance of Roosevelt and his ill-fated Defense Mediation Board, the UAW set important precedents by winning the union shop and eliminating traditional Southern wage differentials. Meanwhile, workers in holdout, open-shop industries again began to respond to CIO organizing drives. Ford and Bethlehem Steel were the most important of these anti-CIO employers; within weeks of one another in spring 1940, however, both capitulated to offensives of the UAW and SWOC. The great Ford strike, in particular, recalled the heroic days of Flint, with its mass picketing, flying squads, and—a new and distinctively American invention—encircling mammoth blockades of strikers' cars. Although the repression of the North American strike was an ominous sign, the general tempo of summer-fall 1941, in the wake of the breakthroughs at Ford and Bethlehem, was a strong upbeat of rank and file energy with clear refrains of the 'spirit of 37'.

This Indian summer of mass militancy was brought to an abrupt halt, however, by the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Rank and file labour was quickly shackled by the restrictions of a wartime no-strike pledge and the regressive wage ceilings of the so-called 'Little Steel Formula.' At the same time the coming of the war was also the catalyst for far-reaching transformations in the organization of the labour force and the role of the state in the economy.

The War Transforms American Society

First there was an 'unprecedented recomposition of the working class' as millions of rural immigrants, women, and blacks entered the industrial labour market. It has been estimated that more than fifteen million Americans moved from one city, state or region to another in search of employment between 1940 and 1945. Four and a half million permanently moved from the farm to the city. Underlying these great wartime migrations was the 'pull' of a new industrial revolution in the

after the breakthroughs at Ford and Bethlehem. Between 1938 and 1940, however, the CIO's numbers had declined as a result of the depression in basic industry and the employers' counter-offensive. Meanwhile the AFL, as we have seen, steadily recuperated its strength through backdoor deals with employers and by recruitment drives in less hard-hit transport and construction industries.

ESTIMATED MEMBERSHIP OF THE AFL AND CIO
(in thousands)

| Year | AFL | CIO |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1936 | 3,422 | 800 |
| 1937 | 2,861 | 1,580 |
| 1938 | 3,623 | 1,717 |
| 1939 | 4,006 | 1,700 |
| 1940 | 4,247 | 1,350 |
| 1941 | 4,569 | 2,850 |

From: Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1960, p. 587.

South and Far West, and the 'push' of accelerating agricultural mechanization and the collapse of cotton tenancy in the Southern blackbelt. The burgeoning arms economy was the midwife of both processes as new concentrations of industrial labour emerged almost overnight in California aircraft plants or Southern shipyards, while older manufacturing centres underwent drastic metamorphoses in their social composition. Particularly striking was the rapid proletarianization of the black population as a result of a new and ongoing exodus northward, which between 1940 and 1945 reduced the percentage of black men employed in agriculture from 41% to 28% while simultaneously doubling the percentage of black workers in the total manufacturing labour force (from 5.9% to 10.1%). Similarly millions of women gained entry for the first time to formerly male-exclusive citadels of mass production and heavy industries. The magnitude of the shifts involved can be gauged from the example of wartime Detroit where, by late 1942, almost 200,000 male workers were conscripted into military service as 750,000 new workers entered the labour-force: including 352,000 rural immigrants, 135,000 women and 60,000 blacks. The confluence of these trends produced a very dramatic, and, as we shall see in a moment, decisive change in the social base and consciousness of industrial unionism.³⁷

Secondly the war alchemized a conflictual restructuring of the historic relationships between organized labour, capital, and the state. The previous estrangement of the dominant fractions of corporate capital from the New Deal was superseded by the intimacy of collaboration as the flower of Wall Street became the economic warlords of Washington while leading reformers were being exiled to minor administrative posts. The reigning congressional alliance of Republicans and right-wing Democrats was reinforced by the rise of a bureaucratic cabal of 'dollar a year' corporate executives and bellicose Southern Democrats in command of the war economy. In contrast to World War One when the army had been obdurately uncooperative with business's efforts to coordinate procurement and production, the generals and the admirals now entered into a new and permanent collusion with war contractors and their political agents. This emergent 'military-industrial complex' succeeded where the NRA had failed in melding the political and economic ingredients for state monopoly capitalism.³⁸

³⁷ Cf. James Green, 'Fighting on Two Fronts: Working Class Militancy in the 1940s,' *Radical America*, 9, 4-5, p. 27; Jay Mandle, *The Roots of Black Poverty*, Durham 1978, pp. 84-85; Roger Keeran, 'Everything for Victory: Communist Influence in the Auto Industry During World War II,' *Science and Society*, XLIII (Spring 1979), p. 7; and Nelson Lichtenstein, 'Ambiguous Legacy: The Union Security Problem During World War II,' *Labor History*, 18 (Spring 1977), p. 224.

³⁸ The vanguard of the new symbiosis between government and big business was the Committee for Economic Development (CED) founded in 1942 by a phalanx of top corporate leaders under the sponsorship of Commerce Secretary Jesse Jones. The CED was a tireless missionary in the business community, ceaselessly trying to convert the medium-sized entrepreneurial strata to the virtues of stronger state intervention—sans welfare—on behalf of private investment. Similarly the CED lobbied for the wartime tax amortization privileges and the Defense Plant Corporation subsidies which pumped billions of dollars of public monies into the reconstruction of the fixed-capital base of American industry. Cf. Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the Peoples' Century*, New York 1973, pp. 63-64; Gerald T. White, *Billions for Defense: Government Financing by the Defense Plant Corporation during World*

But this new coordination of private accumulation and the imperialist state required a level of labour productivity and industrial peace which could only be secured through the willing collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy. Interestingly, the CIO leadership on the eve of World War Two (and under the influence of Catholic corporatist theories) submitted precisely such a plan for permanent harmonization of the interests of capital and labour through an integration of collective bargaining and scientific management. The proposal which Philip Murray took to Roosevelt in December, 1940 as a basis for the organization of defense production advocated the formation of 'industrial councils' which would allow unions to participate in various aspects of plant management while encouraging a common interest between workers and the front office in raising productivity. Murray made the argument—later expanded by Walter Reuther—that the greater the degree of formal union 'partnership' with management and government, the more effective the control which the union leadership could exercise over disruptive or subversive 'minorities' in the rank and file.³⁹ The political clout of the CIO, however, had been too badly eroded by internecine fighting with the AFL and desertions within its own camp (including the all important UMW in 1942) to win much support for this industrial council scheme. Instead the labour movement as a whole, including the AFL, paid for its disunity by its exclusion from the summit levels of the war economy as well as by its continuing weak and largely ineffectual influence upon Congress. Although like the Wilson administration of 1917-18, FDR's third term mouthed the rhetoric of a 'tripartite' war effort, its real commitments were revealed by the demotion of labour to a minor role in the key War Production Board while billions of dollars-worth of prime contracts were being awarded to notorious violators of the Wagner Act.

The defeat of the CIO's call for 'industrial democracy' was partially mitigated, however, by the War Labor Board's reluctant concession of a generalized 'maintenance of membership' (quasi-union shop) and automatic union dues check-off in the summer of 1942. As Nelson Lichtenstein has shown in a careful study, the administration was above all concerned to shore up the position of the labour bureaucracy in face of internal union decomposition and the consequent loss of control over the workforce.⁴⁰ Increasing restiveness against the no-

War II, University (Alabama) 1980; and Philip Burch, Jr., *Elites in American History*, New York 1980, pp. 72-3, 386-88.

³⁹ The industrial council scheme might be taken as an American prefiguration of the postwar German system of industrial 'co-determination' (*Mitbestimmung*). Its direct antecedent was the AFL's self-defeating enthusiasm for scientific management in the 1920s as a bridge to labour-capital cooperation. Murray elaborated his ideas, with the help of Morris Cooke, in *Organized Labor and Production: Next Steps in Industrial Democracy*, New York 1942. This reorientation of CIO strategy was continued in Clinton Golden and Harold Ruttenberg, *Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*, New York 1942. Golden and Ruttenberg, high officials of the Steelworkers, offered management a bundle of olive branches ranging from cessation of wildcat strikes to CIO cooperation in raising productivity in return for the establishment of the closed shop. For them 'industrial democracy' meant 'worker participation in management as an outlet, improving productivity and reducing costs.' See Milton Derber, *The American Idea of Industrial Democracy, 1865-1965*, Urbana 1970, pp. 370-73, 377 (Reuther), and 380-82 (Golden and Ruttenberg quote).

⁴⁰ Lichtenstein, 'Ambiguous Legacy,' pp. 228-235.

strike pledge amongst war workers (especially in the strategic shipyards), as well as the re-emergence of Lewis as an independent and possibly rebel pole in the labour movement, compelled the government to reinforce the power of Murray and company. The result was a kind of social contract which 'conscripted' war workers into unions while at the same kind denying the unions any authentic capacity to represent the economic interests of their members. 'Maintenance of membership' thus helped produce a dramatic increase in unionization, but with entirely different consequences from the struggles of the early thirties, since workers were now organized by the state into unions, rather than organizing themselves.⁴¹

The Wartime Strike Wave

At the same time the turbulent recomposition of the workforce was breaking down many of the social networks and primary work groups which had been the autochthonous roots of the CIO. Continuity of militancy was in a sense displaced upwards into the layer of veteran secondary union leaders—stewards, committeemen and local officials—while the base became more anomic, volatile and transient. As a direct consequence the class struggle within the war plants regressed to a more primitive level of sporadic, semi-spontaneous outbursts. These flare-ups nonetheless acquired a cumulative dynamic of their own as inflation and declining real wages continued to stir mass discontent. The catalytic agent which transformed this simmering unrest into an explosion was, predictably, Lewis' coal miners. The least affected by shifts in the labour force or the turmoil of wartime migration, the UMW rank and file exerted continuous pressure on Lewis to keep up the fight against the employers. In the face of a particularly determined wildcat strike by Pennsylvania anthracite miners in 1943 that, for the first time in a decade, challenged his control, Lewis was forced to lead the UMW into an open rebellion against the no-strike pledge. After four general walkouts in defiance of Roosevelt's threats to draft strikers and send the army into the coalfields, the mine workers won their demand for 'portal to portal' pay. Although viciously calumniated by the press, the UMW victory electrified rank and file workers in war industries. 'By 1944 as large a proportion of the work force were taking part in work stoppages as at the height of the sitdown strikes seven years before.'⁴² The rebellion was particularly extensive in rubber and auto where it took the form of successive waves of wildcat strikes. While 'all Akron rose in revolt' against the no-strike pledge and the international leadership of the rubber workers union, more than half of the UAW membership joined an unauthorized walk-out of some variety in 1943.⁴³

The CIO was thrown into an acute crisis. With the support of the War

⁴¹ 'The 1940s did not witness the striking transformations in class consciousness that occurred during the Depression, when there was a "making" of a white, male working-class identity that did not exist as coherently in the 1920s. In fact, the war years brought a great influx of blacks and women into the working class. But this period did not see a significant integration of these newcomers into the conscious working class or its institutions.' (Green, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, p. 28.)

⁴² Lichtenstein, p. 234.

⁴³ Cochran, *Labour and Communism*, p. 202.

Labor Board the bureaucracy attempted to isolate and punish individual militants: in rubber alone hundreds of shop stewards were purged and blacklisted. But conditions on the shop-floor—particularly the nearly complete breakdown of grievance procedures—continued to fuel the wildcat movement. As national trade union executives became virtual representatives of the government, the secondary leadership increasingly took up the complaints of the rank and file and began to coordinate resistance to the no-strike pledge. In rubber this new layer of rebel leaders took control of key Akron locals, while in auto Briggs Local 212 led by the fiery Emil Mazey became a national rallying point for insubordinate shop stewards and local officials.⁴⁴

Politically this rebellion of the local leadership was translated into new enthusiasm for the concept of a labour party. There was a pervasive sense in union ranks that the New Deal had collapsed and that the country was caught in a wave of reaction, exemplified by the passage of the anti-labour Smith-Connolly Act in 1943. In the UAW the Mazey-ites, with supporters in fifty locals, were the most committed to the creation of an independent labour party. In 1943 they took over the almost moribund Michigan Labor's Nonpartisan League, revitalized it, and changed its name to the Progressive Labor League with the declared purpose of creating a state labour party as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Dubinsky (ILGWU) wing of the American Labor Party in New York, which was engaged in a fierce battle with the Hillman-CP 'left wing,' was advocating a state by state expansion of the ALP. Dubinsky had not the slightest desire to challenge FDR's national leadership, but he was dissatisfied with the sycophantic subservience of the ALP to the New York Democratic Party. He envisioned a multiplicity of state labour parties which would allow the trade union bureaucracy to exert more forceful and independent leverage vis-à-vis local and state Democratic apparatuses. Although Dubinsky and the UAW dissidents were motivated by different visions (Mazey and his friends were much further to the left—even peripherally influenced by Trotskyism), their mutual interests in fostering a more independent labour politics impelled them in a similar direction.⁴⁵ Clearly this renewal of third-party agitation, connected as it was with the massive grassroots upheaval against the bureaucratization and incipient stratification of the unions, offered the best prospects since 1937 for the reconstitution of a socialist current in the working class.

Tragically, however, no large, industrially implanted left cadre was available to coordinate the struggle against the no-strike pledge and to nurture the various seedlings of independent political action. The Communists possessed the only left organization of sufficient size and resources, but they were adamantly opposed to the wildcat movement and to its political offshoots. The CP had moved so far to the right since 1941 in support of the war effort that the traditional left-right spectrum no longer accurately measured the real differences between

⁴⁴ Lichtenstein, pp. 235-237; also see his University of California PhD Thesis (1974), 'Industrial Unionism Under the No-Strike Pledge,' pp. 371-73.

⁴⁵ Lichtenstein, 'Industrial Unionism,' pp. 432, 536-53.

factions of the CIO. The Browder leadership, for example, surpassed the most reactionary layers of the bureaucracy in its advocacy of speed-up and piecework; and when rank and file workers struck for higher wages or against inhuman conditions on the assembly lines, the party was the first to defend the no-strike pledge.⁴⁶ It also consistently supported the Murray-Hillman leadership in its efforts to crack down on 'divisive' third-party currents within the CIO. In Michigan the Communist-dominated Industrial Union Councils fought tooth and nail against Mazey's attempts to float a state labour party, while in New York the CP collaborated with Hillman in reducing the ALP to an uncritical and purely dependent appendage of the regular Democratic Party.⁴⁷ Finally in 1944 Browderism reached its *reductio ad absurdum* with the formal dissolution of the party and the adoption of the so-called 'Teheran Line' with its illusions in a permanent pacification of the class struggle and a postwar Soviet-American alliance.

The Communists' abdication of leadership opened the way for anti-communist forces within the CIO to manipulate the rank and file unrest to their own factional advantage. The later postwar destruction of the CP's trade union influence can only be understood against the background of its isolation from wartime strike currents and its dependence upon inter-bureaucratic politics. Within the important United Electrical Workers (UE), for example, anti-Communist dissident James Carey and his Jesuit-led allies from the American Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) (who modeled their organization on CP factory cells) profited from grassroots dissatisfaction with the Communist-dominated international leadership. Meanwhile in the UAW, the explosive issues of incentive pay and speed-up—both of which were defended by the Communists and their allies in the Addes-Frankenstein faction—provoked a deep split in the leadership. The Reuther faction alone reoriented itself to the rebellion of the locals and outflanked the Communists and their centre allies by appearing as the most militant wing of the national leadership. From 1943 onward the Reutherites inexorably gained ground at the CP's expense, while also recruiting key rebels like Mazey. Reuther's leadership of the 113-day General Motors strike in 1946 was the ultimate masterstroke in this strategy of channeling rank and file energy for factional ends. It provided a 'safety-valve' for the accumulated anger of the auto workers while simultaneously consolidating Reuther's organizational hegemony and dismantling the rank and file caucus movement which had provided leadership to the wartime wildcats.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cochran, pp. 210–11. Typical CP wartime leaflet: 'Advocates of strike threats or strike actions in America in 1945 are SCABS in the war against Hitlerism, they are SCABS against our Armed Forces, they are SCABS against the labor movement.' (Cited in Keenan, 'Everything for Victory,' p. 23.)

⁴⁷ Lichtenstein, 'Industrial Unionism,' pp. 544–53. A short-lived labour party, growing out of the Michigan LNVP and inspired by the successes of the Canadian CCF in the 1944 Ontario elections, was launched as the Michigan Commonwealth Federation under the chairmanship of Matthew Hammond, an old WFLA activist and president of the fourth largest UAW local in Detroit. Cf. Judah Drob, 'Report on Michigan Commonwealth,' *Emancipator*, 2 (Fall 1944): pp. 19–24; and Mary and Willard Martinson, 'Commonwealth in Michigan,' *Common Sense*, June 1945, pp. 13–14.

⁴⁸ Thus, despite the pivotal role of rank and file leaders in the organization of the wartime strike wave, no current with an articulated 'shop-stewardist' perspective

The Racist Backlash

The weakness of left influence over wartime labour militancy also diminished one of the few counterweights to the pervasive and growing racism of the white working class in the war plants. At the beginning of rearmament, blacks had been universally excluded from defence jobs, and it was only after the rise of the 'March on Washington Movement' in 1941 organized by a black trade unionist, A. Philip Randolph, that Roosevelt reluctantly signed an executive order against job discrimination. Although real job equality was never remotely achieved, significant numbers of black workers did obtain footholds (usually the worst jobs) in aircraft, vehicle assembly and shipbuilding, where they often worked side by side with newly proletarianized whites from the rural South and Southwest. The result was that the wartime insurgence against working conditions and the no-strike pledge often overlapped with racist attacks on the new black workers. Thus between March and June 1943, over 100,000 man-days were lost in a wave of 'hate strikes' against the upgrading of black workers. One of the largest occurred at the Packard Works in Detroit in April 1943 when 25,000 whites struck 'in retaliation for a brief sitdown of Blacks protesting their not being promoted'.⁴⁹ Two months later all of Detroit erupted into anti-black pogroms and riots which took thirty four lives. A year later, and following innumerable other incidents in shipyards and rubber plants, a massive racist outburst in Philadelphia, sparked by the refusal of white streetcar employees to work with blacks, forced FDR to send 5000 federal troops to restore order. Anti-black virulence also undermined the CIO's attempt at its greatest political coup—UAW leader Richard Frankensteen's campaign for the mayoralty of Detroit in 1945. Frankensteen's predicted victory was snatched from under his nose by the defection of white auto workers protesting the CIO's endorsement of the federal Fair Employment Practices Committee.⁵⁰ Other examples could be given of how wartime labour militancy was infiltrated by racism; unlike the 1933–37 strike wave which had produced a deep unificatory dynamic within the factory working class, the 1943–45 strikes vented frustration and anger without socializing the new workers in a common 'culture of struggle' or assimilating their racial and sexual divisions. Furthermore the racism of the white industrial working class would become—as we shall see later—an achilles heel of the CIO's efforts to transform national politics.

survived into the postwar period. Still employers and union bureaucrats were convinced by the experience of the wartime wildcats that industrial stability required the replacement of voluntary rank and file representatives by more 'responsible' full-time officials. The 1946 auto contract, for example, replaced working shop stewards (one per twenty-four workers) with full-time union 'committeemen' (representing hundreds of workers). This tendential decomposition and bureaucratization of rank and file leadership, together with the anticommunist purges of the late forties, was a major factor in the erosion of militancy in the postwar period. In contrast to the British case, where the war re-invigorated the shop steward movement with decisive repercussions for the postwar class struggle, American unionism became even more singularly distinguished by its high density of bureaucrats and relatively low density of shop-floor activists.

⁴⁹ Cochran, pp. 221–223.

⁵⁰ Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, New York 1974, pp. 221–223; and James Caldwell Foster, *The Union Politics: The CIO's Political Action Committee*, Columbus (Mo.) 1975, p. 59 (the Frankensteen campaign).

IV. The CIO's Political Action Committee

A Surrogate Social Democracy?

So far we have been primarily concerned with the various unsuccessful attempts to build a third party on the basis of industrial unionism, and have skirted the question of the CIO's actual relationship to the Democratic Party. For some commentators, however, the greatest watershed in American labour history was the trade union movement's entry into the Democratic Party as its liberal pole. It has even been argued that the debate about the unique 'failure of socialism' in the United States is spurious to the extent that the Democratic Party itself has become a surrogate social democracy. Thus David Greenstone, in one of the few studies which has explicitly focused on the interrelationships between trade union militancy and political mobilization, takes the nuanced position that the labour-Democratic coalition has constituted 'a partial equivalence to the social-democratic-trade union alliances in much of Western Europe.'⁵¹ Michael Harrington has more brazenly proposed that there exists a full correspondence or functional homology between the labour wing of the Democrats and European social democracy. 'The most bizarre fact of all: that there is a mass social democratic movement in America today in a pro-capitalist, anti-socialist disguise.'⁵²

How reasonable is this 'bizarre fact?' Has the integration of the trade union movement into the Democratic Party produced, even tendentially, a peculiarly American version of social democracy in capitalist drag? A brief critical sketch of the history of the CIO's troubled alliances with the Roosevelt and Truman regimes may help clarify to what extent labour succeeded in instrumentalizing its vital political objectives through the Democratic Party.

The political alliance between the CIO and the Democrats dates, of course, from the formation of Labor's Nonpartisan League in 1936; but the real institutional coalescence of the two only permanently took hold in 1944 with the launching of the Political Action Committee (PAC) as the CIO's new campaign apparatus. The PAC was created in response to parallel crises in the party and the CIO. On the Democratic side, the party had suffered a serious defeat in the 1942 Congressional elections with the defection of most of the Midwest to the Republicans. Within the reduced New Deal alliance the urban vote was correspondingly more crucial than ever, but, as Clark Clifford warned Roosevelt in a secret 1943 note, the big city Democratic machines were in 'profound crisis' and could no longer reliably guarantee the delivery of the ethnic working class vote.⁵³ The debilitation of the machines was partially due to the atrophy of their patronage resources following the increasing federalization of relief and employment, and partially a result of the success of industrial unionism in weakening traditional dependencies between workers and wardheelers. Roosevelt and his

⁵¹ J. David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics*, New York 1969, p. 361.

⁵² Michael Harrington, *Socialism*, New York 1972, p. 132.

⁵³ Cochran, p. 237

chief politicians thus attached priority to the creation of a trade union political apparatus which could compensate for the increasing electoral deficiencies of the boss system, while also extending Democratic hegemony to the newer industrial centres in the South and West.

On the CIO side, a great deal of soul-searching had taken place in the wake of the humiliating failures of its congressional lobbies and its relative marginalization in the councils of the war economy. The need for a new political strategy was given special urgency in June 1943 with the passage of the Smith-Connally Act authorizing presidential take-overs of strike-torn industries and banning direct union political contributions. The worst suspicions of Murray and Hillman were aroused by the knowledge that 'the AFL's chief lobbyist, John Frey had secretly allowed a number of pro-AFL congressmen to vote with the majority in overriding President Roosevelt's veto.'⁵⁴ They saw the spectre of an AFL-conservative alliance armed with the power to hamstring or even roll back industrial unionism. At the same time they were disturbed by the pro-labour party rumblings within their own ranks, particularly to the extent that these were coming from the same dissident corners responsible for the wildcat movement. The essence of the CIO's political problems, as the Executive Board saw it, was its failure to deeply politicise its membership. Voter non-participation was notoriously high in the industrial working class, and the wartime recomposition of the labour force made the situation even worse. A pre-election survey, for instance, of UAW locals in Detroit in 1944 revealed that barely 30% of the membership was registered to vote.⁵⁵ The goal, therefore, of the CIO in establishing PACs on a national and local basis was to create a new 'CIO voter' whose adherence to the New Deal wing of the Democratic Party would become as natural and reliable as that of a British labourite or European social democrat. The PACs aimed to achieve this through massive voter registration campaigns and the creation of a permanent army of precinct workers.

'The Last Great Hope of the New Deal'

Leftists and liberals welcomed the PAC as a 'revival of the popular front' and 'the last great hope of the New Deal.' Although a few dreamed from time to time that the PAC might ultimately prove the nucleus of a future labour party, the more broadly embraced vision was that it was the vehicle for establishing liberal supremacy within the Democratic Party. The CIO leadership, the Communists, and a broad spectrum of 'progressives' all agreed that the formation of the PAC was part of a process of realignment which would eventually rally labour, New Dealers, and progressive Republicans into a single liberal party, while forcing Bourbon Democrats and the Republican mainstream to regroup in a second, conservative party. Moreover it was generally held that such a realignment was the indispensable precondition for resuming the march of reform and breaking through the intractable roadblock which had been created by the collusion of Southern Democrats with the Republicans since 1938.

⁵⁴ Foster, *The Union Politic*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Riker, 'The CIO in Politics,' p. 163.

Unquestionably the CIO invested tremendous energy and resources into building the PAC, and great claims were made for its role in the Democratic successes of 1944. The new grassroots campaign machinery with its tens of thousands of campaign workers was indisputably vital to the Democrats, but the CIO gained surprisingly little in exchange. This was partially due to the PAC's reluctance, under Hillman's leadership, to actually go into the trenches to defend the New Deal or to exact any meaningful quid pro quo from Roosevelt. Specifically in 1944 the struggle between the right and liberal wings of the Democratic Party had become focused on Vice-President Wallace's quest for renomination. Wallace—an odd fish even by the standards of American politics—had emerged as the champion of beleaguered New Dealers; almost alone in the administration he continued with religious zeal to defend regional planning, to make populist attacks on monopoly, and to advocate the CIO-sponsored proposal for an 'Economic Bill of Rights.' With FDR in failing health, the Southern conservative wing (which supported Byrnes) and the big city machines (who supported Truman) were united in their opposition to Wallace's renomination as heir apparent. Although the stakes were clear, the CIO leadership hesitated to openly challenge the power of the machine bosses, and, as Markowitz observes, 'Hillman made no attempt to apply pressure on Roosevelt for the Wallace candidacy.'⁵⁶ The result was tacit CIO endorsement of Senator Truman, protégé of the corrupt Pendergast machine in Kansas city, and the defeat of Wallace.

The PAC's failure to defend Wallace was the prelude to a series of further defeats over federal reconversion policy, as the supposedly 'progressive' 79th Congress repeatedly gave way to the corporations on tax policy and emasculated welfare and employment legislation.⁵⁷ The tax concessions were particularly significant since they allowed corporations which showed losses after the war—as a result of strikes, for instance—to claim rebates from their wartime excess profits tax. This was little more than a publicly financed war-chest for the corporate showdown with the unions that was universally anticipated after V-J Day. The attack on labour, however, was to take a different form from the employers' offensive at the end of World War One. Rather than seeking to roll back unionism in mass production industries altogether, as had the earlier 'American Plan,' the strategy of big business in the Truman years pivoted around the containment of industrial unionism within institutional constraints which harmonized collective bargaining with the restoration of full managerial control over the labour process. At Truman's ill-fated National Labor-Management Conference in

⁵⁶ Markowitz, *Peoples' Century*, pp. 97–98. According to Markowitz, the 1944 Convention 'was primarily an example of Roosevelt's failure to transform the Democratic Party into a liberal-labor party... The Truman victory was the nadir of Rooseveltian politics.' (116)

⁵⁷ The contrast with Britain under the Labour government puts the failure of the PAC in sharper relief. 'Even when wages were good, the American worker did not receive the protection afforded... his British counterpart: a guaranteed forty-hour week, programs for reemploying displaced workers, separation and relocation pay, preservation of peacetime seniority for those transferring to war work, and an updated social security program.' (Paul Koistinen, 'Mobilizing the World War II Economy: Labor and the Industrial-Military Alliance,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 42 (1973), p. 469.)

October 1945, for example, the business delegation, while accepting the utility of collective bargaining in the abstract, 'placed managerial inviolability at the center of its program for postwar labor relations.'⁵⁸ Over a decade of intermittent rank and file guerilla warfare, spiced with sitdowns and wildcats, had eroded the formerly despotic powers of foremen and line supervisors. Rejecting the CIO's warmed-over pleas for more 'industrial democracy,' the front-line corporations in auto, steel and electrical manufacture adopted a plan of battle which, by maintaining a hard position on wages, aimed purposefully to provoke long, draining strikes to deflate grassroots militancy. Ultimately the corporations hoped to force the unions to accept a tough trade-off between wage increases and control over working conditions. In particular they wanted strong curbs on the role of rank and file leadership, the restriction of the right to strike, and long, multi-year contracts.

1946—Year of the Big Strikes

The explosion when it came in the late fall of 1945 was bigger than any previous strike wave in American history, and it wrecked havoc with relations between the CIO and the Democratic Party. In the year after V-J Day over five million workers hit the picket line, and by the end of January 1946, the industrial core of the economy was virtually at a standstill as the auto, steel, electrical and packinghouse workers were simultaneously on strike. As Art Preis points out, 'for the number of strikers, their weight in industry and duration of struggle, the 1945-46 strike wave in the U.S. surpassed anything of its kind in any capitalist country, including the British General Strike of 1926.'⁵⁹ In contrast to 1936-37 or even 1941, however, there was minimal rank and file initiative in the organization of the strikes; the corporations generally did not attempt to run scabs and the CIO bureaucracy was in firm control of day to day tactics. Indeed, as we have already seen in the case of Reuther and the GM strike, there was a deliberate strategy to use the strikes to let off steam in the ranks while centralizing further the power of the national union leaderships. In the one case of 'run-away' militancy—the several city-wide stoppages led by militant local CIO Industrial Councils—the Executive Board clamped down ruthlessly, stripping the Councils of their autonomy and removing them from local democratic control.

Meanwhile Truman responded to the labour movement's plea for support by enjoining the miners, threatening to conscript the railroad workers, and calling for broad repressive powers. This anti-labour stance, reminiscent of Wilson's sharp turn in 1919, coincided with a purge of Wallace (now Secretary of Commerce) and other former members of the New Deal inner circle. As a result the political strategy of the CIO and their liberal supporters was temporarily thrown into

⁵⁸ David Brody, 'The New Deal and World War Two,' in John Braeman, et. al. (eds.), *The New Deal: The National Level* (Volume One), Columbus 1975, p. 286. Also cf. Derber, *Industrial Democracy*, pp. 394-399; and Barton Bernstein, 'The Truman Administration and Its Reconversion Wage Policy,' *Labor History*, VI (1965), pp. 228-250.

⁵⁹ Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, p. 276.

chaos. Murray was briefly and uncomfortably thrust, for the first time, into a position of opposition to the administration, while his erstwhile Communist allies, shedding their longheld position that the Democratic Party was 'the popular front,' were gingerly exploring the possibility of a left-liberal third party supported by units of the PAC and its non-labour affiliates. Not to be outflanked by the Communists, Walter Reuther, Norman Thomas, John Dewey, and a host of other putative social democrats came together in May 1946 as the shortlived 'National Educational Committee for a New Party.' Neither the Communists nor the social democrats, however, proposed an immediate political break with the Democrats; instead they counted on PAC successes in the 1946 congressional elections to shift the balance of power to the progressive pole. But millions of workers, alienated by Truman's return to government strike-breaking and his failure to control the rising cost of living, ignored the pleas of the PAC and boycotted the congressional elections of 1946. In the face of the PAC's inability to clearly demarcate itself from administration, the 'new labour voter' proved chimerical. With the participation of a mere 30% of the electorate, 'CIO candidates were crushed,' and the first Republican Congress since Hoover took office over the decimated ranks of the New Deal Democrats. In stark contrast to the contemporary accomplishments of Attlee's Labour government in Britain, the first postwar US congress set aside earlier promises of an 'Economic Bill of Rights' in order to concentrate on the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and the salvation of anti-Communist regimes in Greece and China.

The Taft-Hartley Act codified the employers' aims of deradicalizing the CIO and of legally suppressing the most effective weapons of labour solidarity. It accomplished the former by imposing the requirement of anti-communist disclaimers for trade union officials, and the latter by outlawing sympathy strikes, supportive boycotts, wildcats, and mass picketing (the sitdown had already been banned by the Supreme Court in 1938). At the same time Taft Hartley also renewed the Smith-Connally Act's prohibition against union campaign contributions in a clear attack on the operations of the PAC. Recognizing the gravity of the threat posed by the implementation of Taft-Hartley, Lewis' miners and the Communist-led United Electrical Workers immediately proposed a campaign of non-compliance augmented by mass mobilizations and, perhaps, even, a general strike.⁶⁰ Murray and the other CIO chieftains were thus confronted with the dilemma of crossing two Rubicons at once: on one hand they had to decide whether to defy Taft-Hartley and lead the industrial unions outside the pale of the National Labor Relations Act; on the other hand, they had to choose whether to support the popular-front groundswell behind Wallace which, with the support of the Communists, was becoming a movement for a third party.

⁶⁰ Lewis, once a strong advocate of state intervention and reliance upon the Democrats, had since 1940 become increasingly disenchanted with the role of the government in industrial relations. By 1947 he had become a solitary champion of the return to strict Gompersian *laissez-faire*, favouring the repeal not only of Taft-Hartley, but of the Wagner Act as well. See Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis*, New York 1977, pp. 475-476.

In the event, however, they declined either to go back into the streets again or to join with the embryonic third-party forces. Instead they chose to reconsolidate their shaken alliance with Truman and the national Democratic Party, allowing the CIO in the process to become an integral component of the administration's escalating anti-communist crusade. Many different pressures were operating to force Murray and the CIO 'centre' to repudiate their longtime allies on the left. In an era of bureaucratic retrenchment, for example, there was no longer the same practical need for the Communists and their particular skills at mobilization and propaganda. The principal historian of the PAC has, in fact, argued that Murray's transition to open, militant anti-communism in 1948 and his temporary alliance with the cold war liberals of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) were basically pragmatic manoeuvres to derail the Wallace movement which he saw threatening PAC's efforts to lobby for a legislative repeal of Taft-Hartley. 'A liberal, Democratic President was the CIO's foremost objective for 1948. Rejection of the Communists and acceptance of the ADA was but a means to achieve that end.'⁶¹ Following the same logic, the CIO's one-sided and obsequious tie to the Presidential level of the Democratic Party—like Gompers's earlier reliance upon Wilson—bound it naturally to the twists and turns of American foreign policy from the ephemeral 'one world' enthusiasms of the Teheran Conference period to the nuclear imperialism of the late forties.

Anticommunism and Working Class Nationalism

But there were even deeper reasons for the sudden riptide of anti-communism which pulled asunder the decade-old 'left-centre' alliance within the CIO. The integration of the unions into the 'Cold War consensus' was correlative to a far-reaching rearticulation of the cultural universe of the American working class. The Second World War, in particular, was a watershed of enormous importance—comparable to the 1890s⁶²—in reforging blue-collar identity. Earlier I contrasted the immanently solidary and perhaps even social-democratic thrust of the CIO with the recharged conservatism of the AFL, as well as with the anomie and racial conflict produced by the wartime recomposition of the industrial working class. By themselves these divergent ideological currents only denoted the contradictory possibilities of the period and the highly unsettled, transitional state of proletarian consciousness. What ultimately created the basis for a new cultural cohesion within the postwar American working class was the rise of wartime nationalism. It must be recalled that 'Americanism' had previously served as the watchword for successive nativist crusades, and that broad strata of the 'new immigrants' stubbornly clung to their old ethnic identifications and patriotisms, refusing to submit to a coercive cultural assimilation. Even the savage official jingoism of the First World War, far from welding together a nationalist unity within the working class, further divided it through its antagonism to the Germans, alienation of the Irish, and persecution of more radical immigrant groups. The significance of the new nationalism which had

⁶¹ Foster, *The Union Politics*, p. 92.

⁶² See Davis, 'Why the US Working Class is Different,' *NLR* 123, pp. 33-36.

been incubated in the thirties and fanned to a fever pitch by the war mobilization was that it was broadly inclusive of the *white* working class (blacks, Mexicans, and especially Japanese-Americans need not apply) and, moreover, was propped-up by powerful material supports. The latter included the job-generating capacities of the permanent arms economy, and, in a more general sense, the new structural position of the American working class within a postwar world economy dominated by US capital. Furthermore with the adoption of peacetime universal military service in the late 1940s—whose burden fell almost entirely on working class youth via a system of class-biased educational and occupational deferments—the American state acquired a potent instrument for inculcating patriotic, anti-radical and pro-authoritarian attitudes in each generation of workers.

Ironically, 'progressives' and popular-front leftists were amongst the most zealous missionaries of the new nationalism. Unlike the First World War when there was courageous and massive resistance to militarism by the Socialist Party and the rww, the majority of the left of the forties uncritically supported Roosevelt's war time leadership. The Communists, in particular, outdid themselves in twisting anti-fascism into a *raison d'être* for promoting official chauvinism—even to the point of actually supporting the 'relocation' of the entire Japanese population of the West Coast into concentration camps in 1942. The CP's attempt to manipulate a camouflage patriotism, like its abdication of leadership in the wartime wildcats, only further disarmed the left before the CIO bureaucracy once the new nationalism was redeployed in 1946–47 as a virulent anticommunism.

Cold War jingoism had its most dramatic impact and sunk its deepest roots in precisely those sectors of the working class which had previously been most insulated from patriotic hysteria. Frequently overlooked in analyses of the postwar working class was the electrifying impact of the Red Army's entry into Eastern Europe upon the Slavs and Hungarians who composed perhaps half of the CIO membership. The left-wing ethnic organizations which had played such a heroic role in the early organization of the CIO, and which had been one of the most important sources of socialist influence on the industrial working class, either collapsed or were marginalized by a huge recrudescence of right-wing, anticommunist nationalism in each ethnic community.⁶³ This recasting of ethnic culture in a fanatical anticommunist mould, and its insertion into a new national patriotic consensus, was largely catalyzed through the Catholic Church and the myriad organizational tenacles (ranging from ACU to the Knights of Columbus) which it extended into the daily life of the Catholic working class.

Thus when Philip Murray and his chief adviser, Andrew Biemiller, sat down to design a new strategy for the PAC in 1948, their first considera-

⁶³ This rightward drift of ethnic nationalism had been foreshadowed in 1939 by the traumatic impact of the Russo-Finnish War in alienating most of the Finno-American working class from its traditional socialist sympathies. For the collapse of farmer-labourism in its former Finnish bastion of the Eighth Congressional District of Minnesota, see Gleason, *Minnesota Farmer-Labourism*, p. 298.

tion was how to recapture the Slavic and Catholic working-class vote. To accomplish this they emphasized the CIO's strong support for the Marshall Plan and in general for Truman's anticommunist foreign policy. At the same time they made the insistent pragmatic appeal that only the reelection of the purportedly chastened Truman would guarantee the passage of long blocked social legislation and the repeal of Taft-Hartley. Through herculean efforts involving armies of trade union precinct workers, the PAC together with the AFL's newly formed Labor's League for Political Education (LPE) mobilized the largest (relative) class vote in American history and gave Truman his seemingly impossible victory over Dewey. The embattled Communists, on the other hand, joined with a rump of popular front liberals behind Wallace's quixotic campaign against the Cold War. Unable to rally rank and file support even in the unions which they still led, they attracted barely 3.5% of the CIO vote.⁶⁴

Hollow Victories and More Fratricide

If the Democratic victory of 1948 was the labour movement's most stunning electoral success, it was also its most hollow. The supposed mandate for a 'Fair Deal' which had been given to Truman and the 'liberal' 81st Congress turned out in reality to be a license for compromise and dilution of the reform program. As proposals for national health insurance were simply shelved (where they remain today), Truman sided repeatedly with private construction interests to transform the Housing Act of 1949 into a subsidy for business and middle-class home owners rather than the public housing program for the working class which the CIO had originally envisaged. Meanwhile, in the classic pattern of FDR's second administration, Truman yielded to the congressional power of the Dixiecrats and began to sacrifice liberal items in his domestic program to secure Southern support for his Cold War policies. Not surprisingly, the first to go were the much vaunted civil rights reforms promised in the 1948 Democratic platform; next was the repeal of Taft-Hartley, the first priority of the PAC program. As the outbreak of the Korean War closed down shop on domestic reformism and brought the Nixons and McCarthys to power in Washington, the CIO found itself once more outside in the cold and empty-handed.⁶⁵

While the CIO bureaucracy was losing the legislative battle in Washington, some of the largest industrial unions were being bled white by labour's 'second civil war'—the struggle between the right and left wings of the CIO. The reluctance of the CIO mainstream to accept John L. Lewis' proposal for mass action against Taft-Hartley is more understandable when it is recognized that many of the same unions were actually exploiting the anticommunist provisions of the act to

⁶⁴ Markowitz, *Peoples' Century*, p. 281.

⁶⁵ See Harvey Sitkoff, 'Years of the Locust,' in Richard S. Kirkendall, *The Truman Period as a Research Field: A Reappraisal*, 1972, Columbia (Mo.) 1974, pp. 95-104. Sitkoff points out that the military-industrial complex created in World War II was consolidated by Truman's corporate-dominated economic cabinet (Snyder, Hariman, Allen, and so on) (pp 87-90).

raid other left-led CIO unions. Thus in 1948 the UAW launched major piratical forays against both the Farm Equipment Union and the United Electrical Workers (UE). After the 1949 expulsion of eleven allegedly Communist-controlled unions from the CIO, these raids turned into a cannibal feast. The most tragic case was the forced dismemberment of the UE, the third largest union in the CIO and traditionally one of the most militant. In 1948 the UE had been able to negotiate from a position of strength representing all the workers in the electrical manufacturing industry; by 1953, after five years of raids and the chartering of a rival international, some *eighty* different unions had parcellized the UE's jurisdiction and were bargaining for a membership only half the size of the 1948 UE rank and file. While raiding was in progress, employers were given a free hand to conduct long sought purges of the militant local and secondary leaderships. On one day in Chicago alone, for example, three electrical companies fired more than five hundred UE officials and stewards (and were later upheld by the NLRB under provisions of Taft-Hartley).⁶⁶

The fratricide within the CIO was also the principal cause of the collapse of 'Operation Dixie,' its Southern organizing campaign. When it was launched in 1946, Murray called it the 'most important drive of its kind ever undertaken by any labor organization in the history of this country.'⁶⁷ The original strategy had envisioned a two-stage process of mobilizing Southern workers: first concentrating organizing efforts against key regional open-shop employers, followed by the political consolidation of the new recruits into local PACs. Implicit in this second stage of 'Operation Dixie' was an ambitious attempt to reshape the national balance of political forces by overthrowing Bourbon power through massive voter registration and the cultivation of a Southern labour electorate. But Operation Dixie barely got off the ground before it was embroiled in the CIO's internecine feuds and anticommunist purges. The crisis came to a head in Alabama when Murray's own Steel Workers tried to break a local of the leftist Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers that represented militant black iron miners around Birmingham. Anticommunism blended with overt racism as the white Steel Workers leadership terrorized rank and file iron miners and prevented black CIO members from voting.⁶⁸ Similar scenarios were enacted in textile and tobacco, and, as Emspak has noted, 'Instead of devoting resources to organizing new people, the CIO devoted its efforts to disorganizing existing unions. In effect the civil war within the CIO spelled the end of any substantive organizing in the South.'⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Emspak, 'Break-Up of the CIO,' pp. 355-58.

⁶⁷ Quoted in F. Ray Marshall, *Labor in the South*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1967, p. 254.

⁶⁸ Marshall, pp. 258-260; and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Harriet Hudson*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1979, pp. 308 and 329-334. Hudson was an astonishingly brave black communist who weathered two decades of beatings, jailings and blacklisting in the Alabama labour movement. In his opinion, 'the steelworkers' leadership wasn't lukewarm on fighting for the rights of the Negro people. It was worse than lukewarm' (329). In addition he emphasizes the exclusion of blacks from the Alabama CIO Executive Board and PAC's refusal to register blacks to vote in Gadsden and other industrial towns (pp. 331-34).

⁶⁹ Emspak, p. 301.

V. The Balance Sheet

In 1952 following Eisenhower's defeat of Stevenson, Jack Kroll, the head of the PAC, sent Walter Reuther a confidential memo in which he sketched a dismal balance sheet of the CIO-Democratic alliance. According to Kroll, the CIO despite its heroic and expensive exertions for the Democratic Party still found itself bargaining with it 'much as it would with an employer.' He pointed out that unlike the British TUC's relationship with the Labour Party, the CIO did not possess a single vote in the inner councils of the party nor any voice in its day to day operation. Its relationship to the congressional Democratic Party was even worse, since Southern conservatives, rather than Northern liberals, held the levers of power in the House and the Senate. 'Thus, the congressional branch of the party could be completely opposed to pro-union legislation, even though the national convention, the democratically-chosen voice of the party, had gone on record as favoring such legislation.' Kroll cited the particularly galling example of Dixiecrat support for anti-union 'right to work' legislation. In summation Kroll argued that the situation had become 'intolerable' and that the CIO should scuttle the status quo as soon as possible for a new political policy more congruent with its interests. His recommendations—never debated—ranged from abandoning politics altogether to concentrating on running CIO members for office.⁷⁰

Kroll's pessimistic assessment was perhaps disingenuous to the extent that it elided the material advantages that the labour bureaucracy exacted from the coalition (political appointments and local patronage power), but it otherwise remains a compelling confession of the bankruptcy of the Democratic road to labour reformism. The harnessing of industrial unionism to renovate the vote-gathering machinery of the Democratic Party was an effective instrumental relationship in one direction only. This fundamental disequilibrium in the process of power brokerage which so frustrated the CIO leadership was the inevitable result of the absence of three factors that were the necessary preconditions for any 'social-democratization' of the Democratic Party: (1) labour unity, (2) a class realignment of the political system, and (3) the elusive 'CIO voter.'

The Problem of Labour Unity

As we have seen, the 'civil wars' between the AFL and CIO, and later within the CIO itself, undermined every attempt to cohere a liberal bloc in American politics or to develop the basis for independent political action by labour. Without minimizing the purely political or inter-bureaucratic aspects of the schism between the AFL and CIO, the underlying determinant was still the persistence of those divisions between the craft and mass production workforces which had polarized the American proletariat since the turn of the century. As we have seen, the surprising resurgence of the AFL in the late thirties behind the banners of labour-patriotism and anticommunism exploited the residual prejudices of the native and old-immigrant-stock workers

⁷⁰ Foster, *The Union Politic*, pp. 199-200.

against the second-generation ethnic labourers in the mines and factories. Working-class disunity was further augmented by the pervasive white racism which all too frequently subverted wartime industrial militancy into 'hate strikes' against black newcomers. Finally, the Cold War dramatically strengthened the hegemony of Catholicism and right-wing ethnic nationalism in broad sectors of the industrial working class.

Yet these centrifugal tendencies within the labour movement might not have been so decisive if the CIO had preserved the momentum of its earlier organizing drives. The stark reality was, however, that industrial unionism was only a *partial* success, and that its defeats were as fateful as its victories in shaping the subsequent history of the labour movement. The anticommunist inquisition within the CIO, in particular, produced a staggering series of losses: the 'deunionization' of the electrical and textile industries,⁷¹ the destruction of promising beachheads in the tertiary, professional and agricultural sectors, and the collapse of 'Operation Dixie.' These reverses, in turn, had long-range effects on the structure of both the working class and of the trade union movement in the 50's and 60's.

First, the failure to extend union organization to the rapidly expanding female clerical proletariat and to Southern workers in general formed the basis for a new hierarchicalization and segmentation of the working class. Henceforth the old ethno-religious dimension of working-class stratification, although scarcely abolished,⁷² lost primacy to racial and sexual divisions in the workforce. Likewise skill differentials became relatively less important overall than union organization and the incorporation into the generalized norm of mass consumption from which most blacks, Southern workers, and female breadwinners were excluded.

Secondly, the powerful solidary principles of the original CIO increasingly gave way to the 'new model' business unionism which the Teamsters, Machinists, and other large AFL unions had pioneered in the late thirties out of an unholy amalgam of craft and industrial union principles. In his *False Promises*, Stanley Aronowitz has demonstrated how craft exclusivism and segmentation reestablished themselves within the postwar CIO unions. Especially destructive of intra-union solidarity were the establishment of separate elections for

⁷¹ Some indicative statistics: textile unionization fell from 20% in 1948 to 7% in 1962, while overall trade union membership in the rapidly industrializing South declined from 34.1% of non-agricultural workers in 1953 to 29.5% in 1964. Marshall, pp. 299, 302.

⁷² The internal structure of the American working class still preserves the visible traces of its earlier stratification. The unionization of basic industry allowed workers of 'new immigrant' stock to rise above subsistence level and to attain the social norm of consumption represented by home ownership and the private automobile. By every other measure, however, their social mobility has been agonizingly slow; in the steel industry, for example, Slavic foremen and supervisors only began to appear in the early 1960s. The retarded occupational mobility of ethnic white industrial workers has variously been a spur to coalition-building with even more victimized black and Hispanic workers, and, on other occasions, the stimulus to ferocious resistance to the upgrading of non-white labour. See John Bodnar, *Immigration and Industrialization*, Pittsburgh 1977, p. 146-7.

different skill categories, of separate departmental seniority lists (particularly discriminatory against blacks and women), and of percentage (rather than 'flat rate') wage bargaining. The result was the reinforcement of 'the social divisions within the factories based on ethnicity, race, and sex' so that 'the solidarity achieved during the CIO drive two decades earlier was destroyed.'⁷³ This erosion of the distinctive identity of the industrial unions, as well as the relative stagnation of their growth, cleared the way for a political, and then organizational rapprochement with the AFL which was as much a surrender to the legacy of Gompersism as a victory for trade union unity.⁷⁴

The South: Pivot of Political Realignment

Labour disunity also contributed to the failure of the strategy of electoral realignment which a majority of social democrats and labour reformers had embraced in preference to the project of an independent labour party. As we have seen, relations between the two wings of the labour movement were at their nadir in 1937-38 precisely when Roosevelt tried to rally liberals in his sole attempt to dislodge the most reactionary wing of the Democratic Party. But the Democratic right wing easily weathered Roosevelt's half-hearted purges, and through its new alliance with congressional Republicans, actually buttressed its power. This congressional united front of Bourbons and Republicans held the balance of legislative power for most of a decade after 1937 and provided the indispensable political machinery for the increasingly bold corporate counter-offensive against the CIO. In order to congeal a majority around their foreign policy initiatives, both Roosevelt and Truman were forced to woo the Democratic right with compromises on social programs and civil rights. Thus from 1938 onwards, the maintenance of a bipartisan consensus in support of American imperialism overrode the exigencies of social legislation or political reform. By accepting the discipline of the Cold War mobilization, the unions and their liberal allies surrendered independence of action and ratified the subordination of social welfare to global anticommunism.

Although the CIO made periodic attempts to outflank the Democratic right by organizing its own popular alliances with working farmers and sympathetic liberal professionals, it failed to make a sustained attack on the citadel of right-wing political power: the rotten-borough system of the South. The entire edifice of Democratic conservatism, as well as the interlinked corporate and cold war political alliances which it sustained, ultimately rested on the linchpins of black disfranchisement and the poll tax.⁷⁵ In the one-party system of the deep

⁷³ Aronowitz, *False Promises*, New York 1973, p. 182.

⁷⁴ The AFL entered the merger negotiations from a position of strength. Since 1953 its share of national union membership had increased from 62% to 64%, while the CIO's had actually fallen from 23% to 20%. This balance of forces was reflected in the dominance of former AFL officials on the unified Executive Council (17 ex-AFL versus 10 ex-CIO) as well as in key political action, lobbying, and foreign policy units. See Graham K. Wilson, *Unions in American National Politics*, London 1979, pp. 7-11.

⁷⁵ Blacks found the New Deal bittersweet at best. Although they had decamped from the Republican Party en masse in 1936 to support FDR, they discovered that the Democratic Party remained as white supremacist as ever. Even his own wife's

South a kind of Jacksonian revolution in reverse, reacting to the threat of populism in the 1890s, had taken the vote away from the majority of the labouring population—white as well as black. In the 1938 congressional elections, for example, 43 Southern congressmen were elected without a *single* oppositional vote, 26 fought an opponent armed with less than 100 ballots, while in 29 districts less than 4% of the electorate voted. These beneficiaries of the 'white primary,' the property qualification, and the two-dollar poll tax, in turn, controlled one-third of the standing committees in Congress and held a virtual veto-power over reform legislation.⁷⁶

The enfranchisement of the Southern masses, therefore, was the key to the recomposition of the Democratic Party and the consolidation of a liberal-labour congressional majority. But the problem of suffrage was inextricably bound up with the existence of those two other pillars of class rule in the South: Jim Crow and the open shop. Only a massive unionization campaign closely coordinated with full support for black civil rights could have conceivably generated the conditions for interracial unity and a popular overthrow of Bourbon power. The abandonment of 'Operation Dixie' in the face of systematic repression and the CIO's own internal cold war contradictions was an almost fatal blow to the once bright hopes for such a labour-based rebellion in the South. At the same time the national CIO's gradual backtracking on civil rights (a trend again intimately connected with the rise of anti-communism) left the black movement even more vulnerable to the racist backlash which swept the country in the late forties.⁷⁷ This disarticulation of the labour and black movements had devastating consequences for both. Its immediate result was to give the ancien regime in Dixie a new lease on life and to allow the Dixiecrat secessionists of 1948 (who bolted the regular ticket in protest at Truman's civil rights platform) to triumphantly reestablish their power in the Democratic Party during the early 1950s. In the longrun it made the civil rights revolution incomparably more difficult and bloody, reinforced white working-class racism, and forced black liberation into a more corporatist mould.

entreaties failed to persuade Roosevelt, ever conscious of his Southern flank, to endorse anti-lynching legislation, much less to support black voting rights. As a result less than 250,000 new black voters were added to the electorate in the thirties. See George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, Baton Rouge 1967, p. 557.

⁷⁶ Dee Brown, 'The South's Belated Revenge,' *Common Sense*, April 1938, pp. 15-17.

⁷⁷ Black leaders complained about the absence of black representation on the national union executives, the CIO's support for avowedly racist candidates in the South, and its failure to mobilize its forces in the fight against the postwar lynch terror. Their central grievance, however, was the CIO's failure to defend the modest wartime gains of black workers during the period of reconversion. The national CIO leadership rebuffed a Communist-sponsored proposal to adjust seniority lists so that lay-offs would not disproportionately victimize blacks. The result, of course, was that blacks—and women—remained 'the last hired, but first to be fired.' Furthermore, by the time of the expulsion of the left-led unions, the CIO's civil rights stance was losing all but its rhetorical substance. This abdication by the CIO was, in turn, a factor in the inability of blacks to regain any economic ground during the Korean War boom. Cf. Williamson, *Dangerous Scot*, p. 165; Ray Marshall, *The Negro and Organized Labor*, New York 1965, pp. 46-49; Foxier, *Black Worker*, p. 287; and Foxier, *The Union Politic*, p. 287.

The Elusive 'Union Voter'

Finally there is the problem of the 'union voter.' The ultimate *raison d'être* of PAC was the politicization of the CIO membership to produce a reliable and disciplined electorate. To achieve this, PAC tried to convince industrial workers that the labour alliance with liberal Democrats was the best political representation of their class interests. It failed to do so in two ways. First because the Democrats did not usually represent the workers' interests, even their most short-term, defensive interests. Repeated experiences of disillusionment and programmatic failure produced cycles of working-class abstentionism and withdrawal from the political system, as in 1942 and 1946; only the threat of complete liquidation of previous reforms provoked high levels of working-class electoral participation, as in the very polarized presidential races of 1936 and 1948.⁷⁸

But the PAC also failed because it misunderstood the nature of the bonds which attached the European working-class voter to his party. It is not, after all, merely a felicific calculus of self-interest that translates membership in a labour movement into a profound, hereditary commitment. Even the most anemic labour or social democratic party in Western Europe harvests the working class's deep cultural self-identification with its institutions. To reproduce European-style political class loyalties in the United States was to assume the replication of a similar set of primary identifications with union and party. There were, of course, moments in the thirties and forties when the struggle for industrial unionism seemed to be creating an alternative culture and a new mode of daily life. The sight of the Women's Auxiliary driving the goons off the streets of Flint or the sound of ten thousand Ford strikers singing 'Solidarity Forever' were experiences that transcend the smug equations in latterday textbooks on the 'Dynamics of Wage Determination.' But the overall character of trade union militancy in the 30s and 40s was defined, as Dubovsky has recently emphasized, by the limited, episodic participation of most industrial workers.⁷⁹ The wartime recomposition of the working class introduced a basic discontinuity which was reflected in the contrasting internal dynamics and political resonances of the 1934-37 and 1943-46 strike waves. Add to this the persistence of labour disunity, and it is clearer why CIO militancy lacked the experiential power and coherence to create the embryo of a

⁷⁸ Indices of the unions' failure to create a cohesive and activist labour electorate: The National Director of COPE (the AFL-CIO successor to PAC and LRP) estimated in the late fifties that less than 40% of the union membership was registered to vote, while a similar survey by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in several states found only 20-30% registered. (Sidney Lens, *Crisis of American Labor*, New York 1959, p. 298.) In a 1970s comparative study of auto workers around the world, William Form surveyed members of the UAW Oldsmobile local in Lansing, Michigan. He discovered that fully 60% of the rank and file disagreed with the political recommendations of COPE and generally did not believe that the union should endorse candidates. Moreover, 40% were registered either as Republicans or 'independents.' (William H. Form, *Blue-Collar Stratification*, Princeton 1976, pp. 146-47.) These studies could be interpreted as corroborative evidence for C. W. Mills's thesis that the two-party system tends inevitably to 'depoliticize' the working class by denying an adequate representation of its immediate interests. (Mills, *New Man of Power*, pp. 269-270).

⁷⁹ Dubovsky, 'Not So Turbulent Years.'

new working-class 'culture.' What was created, instead, was a new nexus of relations and alliances in the workplace that provided sufficient unity to ensure the effectiveness of the union, while outside the plant the working class continued to find its social identity in fragmentary ethnic and racial communities.⁸⁰

The political strategy of the CIO actually contributed to this attenuation of militancy as the subordination of the unions to the Democratic apparatus reciprocally conditioned and reinforced the canalization of shopfloor activism into a new legal labyrinth of time contracts, government mediation, and legislative lobbying. It was ironically John L. Lewis, the original architect of the CIO's subordination to the New Deal, who played the role of a lonely Cassandra to the trade union bureaucracy in the late forties—reminding them that the real political influence of the unions was ultimately anchored in their capacity to mobilize and sustain mass action at the point of production. Accordingly, he advocated a fighting response to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act. By relying on backroom lobbies and campaign support for the Democrats instead, the CIO leadership willingly conceded the last vestiges of its political independence and demobilized the rank and file militancy which was source of its own political leverage.⁸¹

In the absence of unity with the black movement and a revitalization of rank and file participation, the trade unions, therefore, became the captive political base for an anticommunist 'liberal' wing of the Democratic Party, whose capacity to enact substantive reform was permanently constrained by both the weight of the Democratic right wing and the exigencies of cold war bipartisanship. The New Deal capture of the labour movement broadened the base of the Democratic Party, but it scarcely transformed it into an analogue of European labourism or social democracy. Indeed what has been more striking than the discrepancy between labour's role in electoral mobilization and finance, and the meager legislative rewards it has received in return? The survival of Taft-Hartley and the stunting of the welfare state in America are among the most eloquent monuments to labour's failure to 'functionalize' its most vital day to day interests through the Democratic Party.⁸² Even the apparently spectacular revival of organized labour's political clout during the Kennedy-Johnson administrations in the 1960s now appears in perspective as a false spring, followed by successive electoral debacles in the 1970s and a new fragmentation of the trade union movement.

If the political influence of the AFL-CIO reached an apogee under Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' in the mid-sixties, it was largely

⁸⁰ For intricate analyses of the complex interfaces between industrial unionism and ethnic politics, cf. Peter Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local*, Pittsburgh 1975; and William Kornblum, *Blum Cellar Community*, Chicago 1974.

⁸¹ For a trenchant interpretation of the contemporary crisis of the American labour bureaucracy, see Robert Brenner, 'A New Social Democracy?', *Against the Current*, Fall 1980.

⁸² 'In 1949, after more than four full terms of Democratic Party rule, the United States ranked last among industrial capitalist states in social welfare expenditures (4.4% of GNP).' (Ira Katznelson, 'Considerations on Social Democracy in the United States,' *Comparative Politics*, October 1978, p. 84.)

because the labour bureaucracy rode the coat tails of the civil rights movement. The militancy of blacks created political conditions for a renewal of social reform for the first time since the late forties and also catalyzed a dramatic surge of unionism in the public sector. The virulent anticommunism and bellicosity of the AFL-CIO Executive, however, split up the alliance of liberal forces as the Democratic Party polarized into hawkish and dovish factions in 1968. Following the AFL-CIO's failure to endorse McGovern's anti-war candidacy in 1972, the more 'liberal' unions like the Oil Workers and the public employees (AFSME) followed the earlier example of the Auto Workers (which left the AFL-CIO in 1967) and reestablished independent electoral apparatuses. In the 1976 presidential election, the campaign committees of these unions joined with the UAW to form the 'Labor Clearing House,' a clearly defined liberal caucus linked to the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party. Meanwhile AFL-CIO chief George Meany had been secretly negotiating with both the Nixon and Ford regimes about the possibility of COPE's return to a Gompersian strategy of bipartisan brokerage; a gambit which subsequently collapsed in the wake of Watergate and the general hardening of the economic class struggle in the 1970s. In 1978 COPE made an attempt to rally the increasingly divided and sclerotic trade union movement in a massive lobbying effort for labour law reform legislation. The defeat of the COPE drive by an overwhelmingly Democratic congress was organized labour's worst political reverse since the failure to repeal Taft-Hartley in 1949, and signalled its declining weight in a rapidly changing and rightward moving Democratic Party. COPE's further failure in 1980 to stem the Reaganite tide in the industrial heartland was only an ironic anticlimax, as half the rank and file stayed home while another quarter 'voted their lunch pails' against a Democratic recession. If an emergent Republican 'majority' is displacing the old New Deal coalition as the fulcrum of the American electoral system, it is only because forty years of marriage between labour and the Democrats have produced a politically dispirited and alienated working class.

Presentation of Deutscher on Poland and the USSR

The essay which follows is the first that Isaac Deutscher wrote in Polish (under the pseudonym 'Ignacy Niemczycki') after leaving the country of his birth in 1939. It appeared in February 1942 in the Polish literary weekly *Wiadomości Polskie* (Polish News) which was published in London by a group of Polish war refugees of various political tendencies, most of whom supported the Polish government-in-exile. The paper attempted to maintain the continuity of prewar Polish culture: in its general tone and even its outward appearance it followed (under the same editor) the pattern of the Warsaw *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News), the leading organ of Polish artists, poets, and writers in the interwar period. Before the war Isaac Deutscher, immersed in illegal revolutionary activity, would not have had any contact with the pro-establishment *Wiadomości*. He had been expelled from the Polish Communist Party in June 1932 for 'exaggerating the danger of Nazism.' While the Comintern was suicidally declaring that 'fascism and social democracy are twins,' Deutscher was advocating common action with socialists against the Pilsudski regime. It was his contacts amongst the most militant wing of the Polish Socialist Party who later, in exile in the early 1940s, provided the bridge between Deutscher and the journal with which he had otherwise little in common.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (22 June 1941) sent a tremor through the colony of Polish exiles in Britain. Their traditional hostility to the Russians had understandably increased after the debacle of 1939 when they once again saw their country dismembered by its age-old foes. Then to see Germany and Russia locked in combat provoked a whole range of ambivalent feelings: amongst many there was a sneaking admiration for the might of the German Army, mingled with a suspicion that perhaps more could have been saved by having opted for 'the other side'. Finally there was a hope that Poland might arise anew after the two giants had bled each other to death.

In such a charged atmosphere Isaac Deutscher's forceful and lucid analysis of the contradictory nature of Soviet society became a political act. Against the rightward drift of the Polish Socialist Party, in particular, Deutscher reasserted the indissoluble link between the defence of the USSR and the future of international socialism. Written in 1942, this uncompromising credo set the themes for the whole body of his work in the following twenty-five years.¹

22 June 1941

Eight months have passed since the fateful date of 22 June 1941 when Hitler began his march on Russia. From that day the two most powerful armies in the world have been locked in epic combat from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Although the German Panzer divisions have in this time conquered a territory no smaller than that of Germany itself, nothing foreshadows the breakdown of the super-human heroism with which the Russian revolution fights for its life and for its banner. Bleeding profusely it finds its greatness anew. The destiny of the world now hangs in balance across the vast spaces of the USSR. Everywhere—in occupied Europe, in the British Empire, in both Americas—people are listening with the same anxiety and hope to the sounds from the distant battlefields. This does not mean, however, that the conflicting class interests have now been replaced by a peaceful class idyll. But in the present war divergent class interests have become temporarily so intertwined that a diehard English conservative, a liberal, a bourgeois democrat, a Polish socialist, a Komsomol youth from kolkhoz—all link their hopes and fears to the struggle on the Don and the Neva.

There is no need to conceal that in this enormous historical game different sides play for *different* stakes. For English conservatism the Empire is at stake, with all its economic advantages derived from the exploitation of the colonies. Bourgeois democracy knows that the German bombers and tanks are out to destroy not only the Soviet state, but also the whole parliamentary system of democratic freedoms—the system which is the historic product of Western European capitalism. Finally, for socialists it is obvious that on the Neva, the Volga, the Don, and the Azov Sea stand perhaps the last bulwarks of defense in the battle so tragically, but temporarily, lost on the Vistula, the Spree, the Danube, and the Seine. It is a battle for the very existence of the workers' movement and the freedom of European peoples—a freedom without which socialism cannot be achieved. Such is the objective logic of historical development. Only the blind or pretenders to the role of Quislings fail to understand that logic. In the terse war communiques we socialists read not only the reports about 'normal' war operations; we are also reading in them the fate of the deadly struggle between revolution and counter-revolution.

The Revolution Reveals its Face

Since 22 June 1941 the Russian Revolution has once again begun to forge unbreakable links with the European labour movement. These links are proving stronger than all the opportunistic manoeuvres of Soviet diplomacy in recent years. It was not the Russian Revolution that in September 1939 shared the torn body of Poland with German fascism. In those unhappy September days Russia had not shown her true revolutionary face—no revolution in history has yet taken on the shape of a jackal scrounging the battlefield. The face which was then turned towards the despairing worker and peasant was the totalitarian mask imposed by the post-revolutionary bureaucracy. Now history is stripping off that mask and revealing the Revolution's true countenance: bleeding but dignified, suffering but fighting on. Cruelly, but justly, history is putting an end to all cynical masquerades.

What is left of those congratulatory telegrams in which the Kremlin spoke high-sounding words about 'the Russo-German friendship cemented by blood spilled in common'? How many other castles, built not so much in the air as on the wrongs done to nations, were to be 'cemented' by the wretched Kremlin architects? On the very eve of 22 June, Moscow was still trying to salvage its friendship with the arch-executioner of Europe by recognizing his occupation of Yugoslavia, Greece, and Norway. The shadow of total war was already darkening the German-Soviet boundary when communiques and denials, laborously produced in the offices of the Narkomindel, tried to prove to an incredulous world that the giant concentration of German troops presented no danger to the Soviet Union, and that nothing had yet clouded the friendship between Berlin and Moscow. Ostriches hatched in eagle's nests were timorously burying their heads in diplomatic sands refusing to admit that a storm was imminent. But an approaching storm does not usually wait for the ostriches to trot out to confront it.

One fundamental truth about the German-Soviet war has to be understood: the heroic resistance of the Russian workers and peasants is proof of the vitality of revolutionary society. Soviet workers and peasants are defending all that, in spite of various deformations, has remained of the revolution: an economy without capitalists and landlords. They defend what they see as their socialist fatherland—and here the accent is on the adjective no less than on the noun. They defend it not because, but *in spite of* the privileges which the new bureaucracy has usurped for itself; not because, but in spite of the totalitarian regime with its GPU, concentration camps, cult of the leader, and the terrible purges. Whoever has had an opportunity to observe Soviet reality even for a short time knows that the totalitarian regime had not strengthened, but on the contrary had weakened the Soviet state. The huge quantity of modern weapons which the Red Army wields in battle could have been produced on a far greater scale and in better quality without the whip that lashes the backs of the Soviet workers. The sword of the revolution would be sharper today if it had been honed by a true democracy amongst the working masses. Solidarity with Russia does not in any way demand that this truth be concealed.

The Myth of 'Two Totalitarianisms'

22 June 1941 also cleared up another confusion endemic in the socialist camp, which found expression in the cliché about the 'solidarity of totalitarian regimes.' Nearly two years of German-Soviet 'friendship' and the policy of annexations which culminated in the first Finno-Soviet War seemed to confirm the slogan about the solidarity of totalitarianisms. From today's perspective, however, the motives of Soviet policy appear more clearly. This was the period in which the Soviet Union was obsessed with assuring for itself the most advantageous strategic positions for the coming conflict with the Third Reich. At the root of Soviet expansionism there were none of those elements which characterize every genuine imperialism. There was no frantic quest for markets, for raw materials, or for profitable investment of capital. Soviet annexation policy was not dictated by the needs inherent in its socio-economic structure, rather it was dictated by the exigencies of the politico-strategic game. This does not mean, of course, that we should condone or justify Soviet policy. There is a limit beyond which, from a socialist viewpoint, no state should be allowed to proceed even in the struggle for its own existence. The freedom and self-determination of other nations constitutes such a limit. Moreover, it is clear that even from an utterly pragmatic standpoint, the violation of the sovereignty of neighbouring countries has turned out to be of doubtful advantage to the Soviet Union.

Since 1939 Soviet diplomacy has treated the problem of defence in purely military terms, neglecting all political and national considerations. A great deal of thought has been given to bases, territories, strategic positions, while the national sentiments of the Poles, Lithuanians, Letts, Estonians, Finns, and others have been treated with contempt. Then, in the moments most critical for the survival of the Soviet Union, these aroused nationalist sentiments have rebounded with a vengeance. The defence of Leningrad, for example, was certainly not strengthened by the damaging wound inflicted on the Finnish

nation allegedly for the sake of this defence. If Hitler's armies have appeared on Finnish soil as avengers of Finnish national pride, if the Finns could watch the bombardment of Leningrad with some *Schadenfreude*—the ground for this ironic state of affairs had been prepared by the Soviet assault on Finland in December 1939.

However we evaluate the final balance sheet of this period, one fact remains obvious—it was not a period of 'solidarity' between 'two totalitarianisms,' but one of preparation for a fight to the death between them. The application of a purely political conception—totalitarianism versus democracy—is in this case utterly misleading. In the German-Soviet war the struggle is not simply between two 'totalitarianisms,' but between two different ideologies based on totally different socio-economic structures. One can, of course, demonstrate very striking analogies between the two regimes, but these do not take into account the socio-economic elements which for a Marxist remain decisive. The differences can be summed up as follows: The totalitarianism of the Third Reich aims at imposing the most draconic discipline on the working masses and on the German bourgeoisie itself in preparation for the final struggle of German imperialism for the domination of the world. Soviet totalitarianism, in contrast, is a product of the combined difficulties of building socialism in a backward, peasant country and of the struggle of the new bureaucratic strata for a privileged position in post-revolutionary society. The fact that the 'solidarity of totalitarianisms' has turned out to be only a short-lived truce, a prologue to their armed conflict, is certainly neither an accident nor a whim of history. Between the two 'twin-like' states there exists, in fact, a vast gulf: the German-Soviet war is the most profound class conflict of our epoch, a conflict on a gigantic scale. In spite of all the crimes committed by the USSR against European socialism in spite of concentration camps, mass deportations, and violations of human dignity in the USSR—this conflict is a *war between socialism and capitalism*.

British workers, guided by a healthy democratic and class instinct, responded to the appeal for tanks for Russia by a record increase in production, although previously during the first Finno-Soviet war they had had nothing but contempt for Soviet diplomacy.

The Central Contradiction

Some socialist writers, just like some ex-communists, have attempted to apply this concept of totalitarian solidarity to the analysis of the Soviet and German economies. The German ex-communist Borkenau, in particular, reached the peak of absurdity when he tried to demonstrate the 'kinship' of the two economic structures. He based his argument on the increased *étatisme* and dictatorial military state planning which he identified with the Soviet state economy. It is obvious that such an argument is theoretically primitive in the extreme. German state economy, in spite of its expansion, constitutes only an adjunct and complement to the capitalist economy of the trusts and cartels. The controls imposed on German capitalists are dictated by the needs of the war economy, and, in the last resort, serve the interests of the

German capitalist order. In the Soviet economy, on the other hand, production, with the partial exception of agriculture, is fully nationalized with no room for capitalist profit. The 'quantitative' differences in the development and extent of the state economy in Germany and Russia have decisive importance and determine fundamental, socially 'qualitative' differences. To treat the high salaries of Soviet dignitaries as 'capitalist profit' is an obfuscation which defies every category of political economy.

The problem of the Soviet Union is one of the contradiction between the progressive relations of production tending towards socialism and the totalitarian political regime. The whole tragic development of the Soviet state has been and remains marked by this contradiction. Unless these contradictory dimensions of Soviet reality are clearly distinguished, one cannot understand correctly either the internal development of the Soviet Union nor its role in world politics. Communist glorifiers point exclusively to the tendency of the Soviet economy towards socialism and present the transformation as an accomplished fact haloed with rosy legends. The victims of anti-Soviet obsessions, on the other hand, see only the black horror of the political regime and haughtily dismiss the still vital socio-economic currents of the revolution, polluted and defiled as they are. An objective socialist point of view allows us to see the two faces of the Soviet state. The reactionary element of Soviet reality found its expression in the nearly two-years-long friendship with the Third Reich, in the division of 'spheres of state interests,' and in the trampling upon of the independence of East European nations. At the same time, however, the progressive element of this reality was bringing this game to an end. The Soviet Union could not *a la longue* play the role of Italy or Japan; Stalin could become neither a will-less tool nor a willing partner of the Axis, in spite of the fact that he was prepared to pay, and has paid, an inordinately high price for evading the inevitable war.

The Paradox of Polish History

The internal contradiction between the socio-economic and political elements of the Soviet regime has also affected the situation in Eastern Poland during the period of Soviet occupation. The grim state of political affairs prevailing under the occupation has been extensively described in the Polish press and there is no need to recapitulate the facts again. Of course, the very fact of the occupation should be condemned. What is even more reprehensible than the mere fact of the occupation has been the way in which it has been implemented: abolition of all local self-government, the cruelty of mass deportations, the banning of independent workers' organizations, and the imposition of the whole byzantine Soviet mode upon the country's cultural life. Yet simultaneously a radical social upheaval has also taken place, the extent and importance of which has been stubbornly unrecognized: the abolition of landed estates and great private capital. True, this was a revolution brought on the points of bayonets, a revolution achieved by barbarous means in an atmosphere of a bizarre mixture of socialism and Asiatic methods. But a revolution brought on bayonets and carried out by barbaric means is *still* a revolution; and it would be difficult to imagine

that Polish socialism would now fight for the restoration of the status quo of 1939 with regard to the property relations on its eastern borders. The changes in social relations brought about by the occupation, if they were to survive the war, would stimulate further changes towards socialism. These are not belated, retrospective conjectures, but the first steps in understanding the progressive and *potentially* socialist element which has not yet disappeared from Soviet reality.

The whole complexity of the Soviet occupation of Poland brings to mind an illuminating historical analogy. Polish history, unfortunately, knows many instances of revolutionary reforms brought from outside 'on the points of bayonets.' Sometimes these were the bayonets of revolution, sometimes those of counter-revolution. Thus feudal relationships in rural Poland were brought to an end in turn by the Austrian Kaiser, the Prussian King, Napoleon, and finally the Russian Tsar. In the formation of the Polish class structure these were progressive measures, but at the same time they reflected the fatal feebleness of this class structure and, particularly, the weakness of our own bourgeois revolution. Our deformed socio-national development was the price which we have paid for the feebleness of our own revolution and for the debility of our own reformist movements in the past. Our Staszics and Dekerts were not Marats or Dantons, and so the occupying monarchies (or Napoleon, for whom Polish independence was, like with Stalin, merely a pawn in the political game) appeared before our peasant masses as their champions against feudal landlords, while in emigration the democratic dreamers and socialist visionaries were helplessly drafting on paper the projects of partial and meagre land reforms. Unfortunately, history repeats itself, but contrary to Marx's saying, what once occurred as drama, appears the second time, not as comedy, but rather as the most terrible tragedy. Today, as in the nineteenth century, the basis of this deformation remains nearly identical: anachronistic relationships of ownership were destroyed from the *outside* because those forces that worked for their destruction from the *inside* did not possess the necessary courage and energy to cope with the task. The consequences and lessons for the future are all too obvious.

The Choice is Clear . . .

The course of the war may bring the contradiction between the reactionary political regime and the progressive economic structure to a highly explosive state. The manner in which this contradiction will be resolved will determine not only the fate of the Soviet Union, but also the fate of socialism in the world for generations to come. Soviet 'totalitarianism,' unlike the German, is being dealt severe blows. According to the opinion of many serious military commentators. Soviet troops entered the military campaign with powerful equipment equal or only slightly inferior to that of the German army. If they have suffered serious defeats, this has been due to a large extent to the debility of the Soviet regime and to the general disorganization which its 'Asiatic' methods have produced. The spirit of sacrifice and the impressive heroism of the people are there for all to see, but sacrifice and equipment are often wasted by the fallibility of 'infallible'

governments. Before the eyes of the Soviet people the war is dispelling the legend of the infallibility of totalitarianism, and this must push the Soviet regime on the road of profound internal transformations. The democratization of the Soviet regime would prove salutary not only for the Soviet Union itself, but would also act as a powerful impulse for the development of socialism elsewhere.

What would the alternative of Soviet defeat mean for us? It would, in the first instance, discredit the idea of socialism for a long, long time to come. Whether we want it or not, socialism (regardless of its shade and tendency) bears the responsibility, in the eyes of the working class, for the outcome of the Soviet experiment. This truth is unaffected by the fact that the Soviet regime is only the bastard offspring—or prodigal child—of socialism. In the historical perspective of the global contest between capitalism and socialism, the Soviet regime would, if it were defeated, remain only a tragic episode, an 'experiment' like the Paris Commune, in which the proletariat, bleeding in vain for over two decades, was finally crushed despite its heroism as it had been crushed before on the barricades of Paris. After the Paris Commune there followed a period of stagnation in the socialist movement. With the defeat of the Soviet commune we would face not only a period of stagnation, but a long ghastly night of triumphant and barbaric counter-revolution. But as the struggle in the east continues, we can still hope, as Broniewski said in his beautiful poem, that Warsaw will once again rise up on the 'reinforced concrete of socialism'—a socialism without totalitarian admixture.

Translated by Tamara Dentscher

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The Tragedy of the Althusser

K. S. Karol

On the morning of Sunday 16 November, H  l  ne Althusser, wife of philosopher Louis Althusser, was found dead in their Ecole Normale flat in the rue d'Ulm. The philosopher, in a state of complete delirium, accused himself of strangling her. The college doctor, Etienne, and the deputy director had to overpower him with the help of a caretaker and have him interned in Sainte-Anne Hospital. No one, either at the rue d'Ulm or among his personal friends, wanted to believe that Louis could really have killed his wife. And yet the first verbal autopsy report did show that H  l  ne's larynx had been crushed, proving that she had been strangled.

This 'private' drama, which plunged their friends into grief, inevitably became a public affair as a result of his fame and stature. It was natural that the press should take hold of it. But not that it should commit a twofold injustice towards Althusser and his wife. First, it was unjust to make a link between Althusser's philosophical thought and the Ecole Normale tragedy. Some are already hinting that he did not have the qualities required to teach. Others, more odious still, are implying that his communist ideas made him a potential murderer. In reality, the tragedy of 16 November brought to a head the appalling torture of a man who for eighteen years had been fighting against a grave psychological disorder. That Sunday, he was evidently no longer capable of 'comprehending or willing anything', so much so that, forty-eight hours later at Sainte-Anne Hospital, the examining magistrate had to give up the idea of serving an indictment upon him. Indecent, then, is the insinuation that he has enjoyed special treatment because of his public name. For while a philosopher should not be above the law, nor should he be deprived of the protection of the French Penal Code, which states that 'there is no crime or offence when the accused was in a state of insanity at the time of the event'. Another injustice has been the exploitation of Althusser's wife, H  l  ne, who was not merely the victim of his madness, but a human being with her own personality, her own work, her own life-history. In most cases, however, I have looked at the papers in vain for a few lines recalling the character and individuality of H  l  ne's life.

H  l  ne was seventy at the time of her death, ten years older than Louis Althusser. Small and frail in appearance, she had remained elegant, very alert and sometimes sharp of tongue. She came from a very poor Jewish family, and had made her own way by studying literature and history, and then trying her luck in the world of cinema (she was Jean Renoir's assistant). Then came the black night of the Occupation. H  l  ne never wore the yellow star, but immediately chose the Resistance where she became 'Mademoiselle Legothien'. She was linked

to Albert Camus and his group, later becoming a liaison worker for the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Français*. It was at this time that she joined the Communist Party. As far as I am aware, it was this woman of action who first drew Louis Althusser, a young philosopher with a Catholic background, in the direction of communism. Having spent the war in a POW camp in Germany, he felt an obvious admiration for this 'real fighter', Hélène, especially since she continued, as a sociologist, to work in the field, 'among the masses', unlike him who was closeted in his study. In fact, Hélène Althusser never gave up work. For more than twenty years, until she reached retirement age, she had carried out investigations with the Research Institute for Economic and Social Development: sometimes working in a peasant milieu or an urban environment, sometimes studying problems of the Third World. Even when she retired in 1976, she kept up her research and was preparing a study of working-class families in the Fos basin.

It is possible that Hélène's investigations among the workers influenced Louis Althusser's political attitudes over the last few years. However, contrary to what some people claim, he has never been a docile follower of the party line: his 'orthodoxy' is based on fidelity to Marxism, not to the PCF. But he was cautious by nature and took his time, as if he thought that, by influencing young people through 'the class struggle on the theoretical front', he could win a highly complicated game of chess against the PCF leadership. Hélène, by contrast, never beat about the bush. Thus, when in April 1978 Althusser 'opened fire on PCF headquarters' with his *Le Monde* series of articles on 'What can last no longer in the Communist Party', some people thought they could recognise Hélène's plain-speaking as much as the philosopher's burst of anger. As for myself, who only became friendly with the Althussers five years ago, I above all had the impression that Louis was merely saying aloud what he had long been thinking and, indeed, had already expressed in his way in a number of more theoretical texts less accessible to the broad public. In order to be convinced of this, one has only to read the long interview on the question of the State which he gave in 1978 to the Rome daily *Il Manifesto*—a text which is in sharp contrast particularly with his 1973 pamphlet, *Reply to John Lewis*. Althusser now extended this critique to the Party itself, seeing it as an institution modeled on the State and therefore incapable of grasping and expressing either the collective spontaneity of the masses or the dimension of the individual.

It is not easy, then, to retrace the intertwined paths of two such different persons. In the domain of ideas and political struggle, Hélène always remained in the shadow, off the political stage. But her role became of prime importance in everything that concerned her husband's psychological illness. Many of Althusser's students, as well as many friends in the world of culture and politics, preferred to ignore this distressing part of his life—either in a spirit of discretion, or because they did not wish to be inconvenienced by it. It was known, however, that since 1962 the philosopher had been subject to periodic bouts of depression which eventually led to ever more frequent periods in psychiatric clinics. Each time he would come out through a huge effort of will; and once again he would start to write, hold seminars,

and engage in political battles, living all the time in fear of what he saw as an inevitable relapse. Our societies are so afraid of mental illness that they shun people afflicted with it, handing them over to institutions or their family. In Althusser's case, the family was confined to H  l  ne. She alone during those long years shared her husband's anguish; herself tormented, tormenting him in her turn. It is difficult enough for a psychoanalyst to find words that will help a patient through his nightmare. But for someone so close! For a wife! Often, the hardest of all is not to allow the destructive lucidity of an acute depressive to drag one down as well. And so it was that Louis and H  l  ne, who could not live without each other, could not find peace through each other.

Early last July, Louis Althusser went into a more serious depression than ever before. Only a few of us were there to follow the torture which he and H  l  ne endured throughout the summer. Paris was empty, most of the university staff having left for their holidays. In his clinic, Louis knew no respite from spectres of death, a feeling of complete loss of identity, and lack of any reason to live. He had become a man without any defence, obsessed with the idea of suicide. I had seen him in other clinics during previous depressions, and I remembered that he had been capable of interrupting his melancholic talk with perfectly coherent and, at times, quite brilliant remarks about Gramsci (one of his favourite targets) or about current affairs. But this time he was cut off from everything. It was explained to me that if his illness had assumed alarming proportions, this was precisely because he was about to overcome it, to throw back the final assault of the malady . . . The prognosis was not confirmed. In early October, Louis and H  l  ne went to the South for a few days before returning to the Ecole Normale. Things went better than during the summer, but that is not to say they were all right. He received virtually nobody, read nothing, spoke little and planned to go back into the clinic. His state worsened just before that last weekend, so that H  l  ne decided to cancel all the engagements she had made for him. She was evidently anxious, but no more than during similar crises in the past. One thing is certain: she was afraid only for him, not for herself, since she had never felt threatened in any way.

Sunday morning she was dead, her face calm, her eyes shut. The ending had no witness, and we shall never know what happened on that fatal morning. Louis Althusser is in too disturbed a state to say anything at all. For her we can do no more, except not to allow her to be erased from our memory, and remind ourselves of the role she played alongside Louis Althusser. For him, however, we can still do something: we can make every effort to ensure that in addition to his despair, he does not have to suffer an internment that would not provide any conditions for a cure. We, his friends, who, in one way or another, for a long or short period of time, have known the benefit of his intellectual lustre and moral integrity, can only hope that beyond the tragedy itself, inner peace will one day return to him.

MARX

On the choice between Socialism and Communism

by Stanley Moore

What divides Pol Pot from Tito, Mao from Deng, Brezhnev from the Eurocommunists? In the last analysis, their choice of goal. This book considers the problem and the extent to which communists now disagree about the nature of the classless society at which they aim. Marx contrasts two types of post-capitalist economy. In one, exploitation has been abolished but not exchange; in the other both have been abolished. Moore finds that Marx's major arguments for abolishing exchange rely on moral and philosophical principles, and that Marx's ideal of communism is incompatible with his materialist approach to history. Both conclusions imply that modern revisionism is the heir of scientific socialism. 1980, £6.60

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| | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| I | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>Eric Hobsbawm</i> | Looking Forward: History and the Future |
| 21 | <i>Leo Panitch</i> | Trade Unions and the State |
| 45 | <i>Philip Corrigan</i> | Bolshevism and the USSR |
| | <i>Harvie Ramsay</i> | |
| | <i>Derek Sayer</i> | |
| 61 | <i>Tamara Deutscher</i> | SCANNER |
| 75 | <i>Norman Geras</i> | Poland: Hopes and Fears |
| | | Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation |
| 90 | <i>Dominique Lecourt</i> | MOTIFS |
| | | Biology and the Crisis of the Human Sciences |

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Both the Heath and Callaghan governments were ultimately brought down by their ill-fated attempts to incorporate the trade-union movement within new systems of state regulation. In a fresh look at 'corporatist' tendencies within contemporary capitalism, Leo Panitch compares the British experience with Swedish and West German examples. He shows how the growth of trade-union membership in the 1960s, coincident with the shrinkage of the labour reserve army, undermined traditional market constraints on wages. The result was a more direct intervention by the state to circumvent the potential power of highly-organized working classes through the creation of social contracts, incomes policies and various tripartite negotiating bodies. Denying that corporatism itself can constitute an alternative 'hegemonic instance' to the traditional role of parliamentary politics, he emphasizes that there are inherent limitations and contradictions in the further statization of industrial relations. In particular he denounces the 'socialist-corporatist' illusions of some reformist currents, while demonstrating how corporatist structures tend to undermine themselves by stimulating rank-and-file insurgency to the same degree as they successfully absorb—and, therefore, isolate—union leaderships.

Under late capitalism fortune-telling (or 'futurolology' as it is fashionably called these days) has become a growth industry as court astrologers have been replaced by complex econometric models and computer-generated simulations. Yet has the sheer accumulation of social statistics and sophisticated methodologies served to make the outcome of historical events—as opposed to horse races or missile trajectories—more predictable? Eric Hobsbawm shows the acute difficulties in making extrapolation into the future from the 'seamless web' of social relationships which is the proper object of historical enquiry, yet insists upon the professional and political responsibility of the historian to make precisely this attempt. As an example of the hazards inherent in hypothetical interrogations of the past, he examines whether the Russian Revolution was predictable by historical materialism. More sombrely scrutinizing the present, he forecasts the likelihood of nuclear war, showing how 'worst case' planning can disastrously shape the very outcomes it formally seeks to avert.

Debates over the Bolshevik legacy are as old as the Russian Civil War, yet remain as urgent and contemporary as the agenda of the New Cold

War. In a succinct and stimulating essay, Philip Corrigan, Harvie Ramsay and Derek Sayer argue that the key to an understanding of the achievement and limits of the tradition of Bolshevism lies in a peculiar combination: its thorough-going acceptance of the rationalized division of labour pioneered by modern capitalist industry—negating any possibility of direct producer sovereignty in the plant—with a compensatory over-investment in an authoritarian state formally imposing the planned energy and authority on the post-revolutionary economy denied at the point of production below. This persistent conjunction of ‘economism’ and ‘voluntarism’, they argue, has made the USSR the formidable industrial society it is today, and secured the central position of the Soviet working class within it. But it will have to be broken and surpassed by free forms of decentralized popular initiative and diminished division of labour for a true prospect of transition to socialism to emerge.

The new, independent labour movement in Poland is the most significant event in that country’s history since its liberation by the Red Army. Yet the paradox remains that the class consciousness of the Polish proletariat—expressed so powerfully by its audacious militancy and superb solidary instincts—is still constrained by a clerico-nationalist ideology symbolized by Wałęsa’s genuflection before his Polish Pope. Tamara Deutscher evokes the burden of modern Polish history to explain how the Catholic hierarchy has been able to maintain its influence over the new proletariat created in the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time she examines the economic underpinnings of the current crisis as well as the new political alignments within Polish society.

The long Polish Summer has also vividly emphasized the need for a comprehensive refoundation of the programme and vision of socialist democracy. Norman Geras’ subtle reassessment of Luxemburg’s and Trotsky’s early critiques of Lenin demonstrates why even the most thorough repudiation of substitutionism remains incomplete and inconsistent without the recognition of the legitimacy of a plurality of parties expressing the class interests of the working class.

Looking Forward: History and the Future

The annual lectures of which this is the first are intended to commemorate David Glass.* He was my friend, and the friend of others in this room who don't need this occasion to recall him in the presence of his inseparable partner, Ruth Glass. He was also one of the most distinguished scholars to teach at the LSE, with which he was so long associated and whose reputation owes much to his presence there. I might add that he represented its finest traditions at a time when not everyone there did so: the traditions of understanding society in order to make it better, of an instinctive radicalism, of an institution whose students, like himself, were not born with silver spoons in their mouths. It is typical that he concluded his very first book on demography—of which he was in his lifetime the most eminent practitioner in Britain—with the call to 'provide conditions in which the working class is able to bring up children without thereby suffering from economic and social hardship'. He was proud to be the first social scientist to be elected to the Royal Society since the great Dr William Farr in 1855, because he saw himself (like Farr) as a social scientist *in and for* society, and not just about society.

So it is natural that the lectures devoted to his memory should be about 'social trends', which I understand to mean in the broad sense the enquiry into the direction of social development and what we can do about it. That implies looking into the future, so far as this is possible. This is a risky, frequently a disappointing, but also a necessary activity. And all prediction about the real world rests to a great extent on some sort of inferences about the future from what has happened in the past, that is to say from history. The historian ought therefore to have something relevant to say about the subject. Conversely, history cannot get away from the future, if only because there is no line which divides the two. What I have just said now belongs to the past. What I am about to say belongs to the future. Somewhere between the two there is a notional but constantly moving point which, if you like, you can call 'the present'. There may be technical reasons for considering past and future differently, as any bookmaker knows. There may also be technical reasons for distinguishing present from past. We cannot ask the past for *direct* answers to any questions which have not already been put to it, though we can use our ingenuity as historians to read indirect answers into what it has left behind. Conversely, as every pollster knows, we can ask the present any answerable question, though by the time it is answered and recorded it will also, strictly speaking, belong to the past, albeit the recent past. Nevertheless past, present and future form a continuum.

Moreover, even when historians and philosophers want to make a sharp distinction between past and future, as some do, nobody else will follow them. All human beings and societies are rooted in the past—that of their families, communities, nations or other reference groups, or even of personal memory—and all define their position in relation to it, positively or negatively. Today as much as ever: one is almost tempted to say 'more than ever'. What is more, the overwhelmingly large part of conscious human action which is based on learning, memory and experience, constitutes a vast mechanism for constantly confronting past, present and future. People cannot help trying to forecast the future by some form of reading the past. They have to. The ordinary processes of conscious human life, not to mention public policy, require it. And of course they do so on the justified assumption that, by and large, the future is systematically connected with the past, which in turn is not an arbitrary concatenation of circumstances and events. The structures of human societies, their processes and mechanisms of reproduction, change and transformation are such as to restrict the number of things that can happen, determine some of the things that will happen, and make it possible to assign greater or lesser probabilities to much of the rest. This implies a certain (admittedly limited) range of predictability—but, as we all know, this is by no means the same as successful forecasting. Still, it is worth bearing in mind that unpredictability looms so large mainly because arguments about prediction tend to concentrate, for obvious reasons, on those parts of the future where uncertainty appears to be

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greatest, and not on those where it is least. Meteorologists are not needed to tell us that spring will follow winter.

My own view is that it is desirable, possible and even necessary to forecast the future to some extent. This implies neither that the future is determined or, even if it were, knowable. It does not imply that there are no alternative choices or outcomes, and even less that forecasters are right. The questions I have in mind are rather: How much prediction? Of what kind? How can it be improved? And where do historians fit into this? Even if anyone can answer these questions, there will still be much of the future about which we can know nothing, for theoretical or practical reasons, but at least we may concentrate our efforts more effectively.

The Delphic Oracle Updated?

However, before I consider these questions, let me reflect for a moment on the reasons why the function of prognosis is not only so unpopular among many historians, but also why so little intellectual effort has gone into improving it, or considering its problems, even among those historians firmly committed to its desirability and practicability, such as Marxists. The answer, you may say, is obvious. The track-record of historical prediction is, to put it moderately, patchy. Everyone of us who has made predictions has frequently fallen flat on his or her face. The safest thing is to avoid prophecy by claiming that our professional activities stop at yesterday, or to confine ourselves to the studied ambiguities which used to be the speciality of ancient oracles and are still the stock-in-trade of newspaper astrologers. But in fact, a poor predictive record has not stopped other people, disciplines or pseudo-disciplines from forecasting. There is a large industry devoted to it today, undeterred by its failures and uncertainties. The Rand Corporation has even in despair re-established an up-dated version of the Oracle of Delphi (I am not joking, the name of this peculiar game is the 'Delphi technique') by asking selected groups of experts to consult their chicken's entrails and then drawing conclusions from such consensus as may or may not emerge. Moreover, there are plenty of examples of good predictions among historians, social scientists and academically unclassifiable observers. If you do not wish to have Marx quoted at you, let me refer you to de Tocqueville and Burckhardt. Unless we assume, what is unlikely, that these are purely random hits, we must accept that they are based on methods which are worth enquiring into if we are to concentrate our fire on targets we can expect to hit and improve our ratio of bulls' eyes to misses. And, conversely, the reasons for notorious flops are worth enquiring into with the same object.

One such set of reasons is, unfortunately, the force of human desire. Both human and meteorological prediction are unreliable and uncertain enterprises, though they cannot be dispensed with. On the other hand those who use meteorology know that they cannot—or if you prefer, cannot yet—change the weather. They aim to plan their actions in such a way as to make the best use of what they cannot change. Individual human beings probably use forecasts in much the same way

in the comparatively rare cases where they take effective action upon them. My late father-in-law, having concluded correctly that Austria could not avoid Hitler, transferred his business from Vienna to Manchester in 1937—but not many other Viennese Jews were as logical as he. However, collectively, human beings are inclined to look to historical forecasts for knowledge which will enable them to alter the future; not only, as it were, when to stock up with suntan lotion but when to create sunshine. Since some human decisions, large or small, clearly do make a difference to the future, this expectation is not to be entirely dismissed. However, it affects the process of forecasting, generally adversely. Thus, unlike meteorology, historical forecasts are accompanied by a running commentary from those who think they are impossible or undesirable on various grounds, usually because we don't like what they tell us. Historians also suffer the disadvantage of lacking solid bodies of customers who, whatever their ideology, need weather forecasts regularly and urgently: sailors, farmers and the rest.

We are surrounded by people, notably in politics, who proclaim the need to learn the lessons of the past when they do not already proclaim that they have already discovered them, but since virtually all of them are chiefly interested in using history to justify what they would have wanted to do anyway, unfortunately this provides little incentive to improve the predictive capacities of historians.

The Problem of Wishful Prophets

However, we cannot only blame the customers. The prophets too must take their share of the blame. Marx himself was committed to a specific goal of human history—communism—and a specific role for the proletariat *before* he developed the historical analysis which, as he believed, demonstrated its ineluctability. Indeed before he knew very much about the proletariat. Insofar as his predictions preceded his historical analysis, they cannot be said to rest on it, though this does not necessarily make them wrong. We must at the very least be careful to distinguish predictions based on analysis from those based on desire. Thus in the famous passage on the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation, Marx' forecast of the expropriation of the individual capitalist through 'the immanent laws of capitalist production itself' (i.e. through the concentration of capital and the necessity for an increasingly social form of the labour process, the conscious use of technology and the planned exploitation of the resources of the globe) rests on a different and more significant historical-theoretical analysis than the forecast that the proletariat itself will as a class be the 'expropriator of the expropriators'. The two forecasts, though linked, are not identical, and indeed we may accept the first without accepting the second.

All of us who have made predictions—and who has not?—know these psychological, or if you prefer ideological, temptations. Nor have we avoided them. If historical predictors were as neutral about the social depressions and anticyclones they forecast as meteorologists, historical prognosis would be more advanced than it is. Together with sheer ignorance, this is, I believe, the major obstacle in the forecaster's way.

It is a much more serious one than the fact that predictions can be falsified by the conscious actions of people who are aware of them. There is little empirical evidence that such action has so far been taken often or effectively. The safest empirical generalization about history is still that nobody heeds even its obvious lessons much—as any student of the agrarian policies of socialist regimes or of Mrs Thatcher's economic policies will confirm. Oedipus unfortunately remains a parable of humanity confronted with the future, but, alas, with one major difference: Oedipus genuinely wanted to avoid killing his father and marrying his mother (as the Oracle correctly foretold), but could not. Most prophets and their customers are apt to argue that unpleasant forecasts are in some ways avoidable because they are unpleasant, that they do not mean what they say, or that something will turn up to invalidate them.

As I have suggested there is already a large forecasting industry. Most of it is concerned with the effect of future developments on fairly specific activities, mainly in the fields of economics, civil and military technology. It therefore asks a fairly specific and restricted set of questions which can be to some extent isolated, even though of course they may be affected by a vast range of variables. There is also an enormous amount of prediction which, whether or not it bears on public or private practice, is not intended to foretell the actual future but to confirm or falsify. Hence it is normally made in conditional form. In principle it does not matter whether verification occurs in the real future or in a specially constructed future such as a laboratory situation from which all elements extrinsic to the matter in hand have been eliminated. There are also propositions, mostly of the logico-mathematical type, which establish consequences. If a real situation happens to correspond to these, they may be said to predict such consequences.

The Singularity of Historical Forecasts

Now historical prediction differs from all other forms of forecasting in two ways. In the first place, historians are concerned with the real world in which other things are never equal or negligible. To this extent they know even before Sir Keith Joseph will discover it, that there is no ideal global laboratory in which we could, as is theoretically conceivable, construct a situation where market prices would have a predictable relation to the monetary supply. Historians are by definition concerned with complex and changing *ensembles* and even their most specific and narrowly defined questions make sense only within this context. Unlike, say, the forecasters of large travel agencies, historians are interested in future trends in holiday making not because they are our primary concern—though we may do specialist research in the field—but in relation to the rest of changing British society and culture in a changing world. In this respect history resembles disciplines like ecology, though it is wider and more complex. While we can and must single out particular strands from the seamless web of interactions, if we were not interested primarily in the web itself, we should not be doing ecology or history. Historical forecasting is therefore, in principle, designed to provide the general structure and texture which,

at least potentially, includes the means of answering all the specific forecasting questions which people with special interests may wish to make: of course in so far as they are answerable at all.

In the second place, as theorists historians are not concerned with forecasting as confirmation. Many of their predictions could not in any case be tested within the lifetime of this or the next generations, any more than the predictions of historical disciplines in the natural sciences can be; e.g. those of climatologists about future ice ages. We may trust the climatologists more than the historians, but we still cannot verify them. To say that analyses of the tendencies of social change must 'be formulated as verifiable predictive propositions' shows kindness to our children and grandchildren but unkindness to poor old Vico, Marx, Max Weber and incidentally Darwin, because it constricts the scope of social analysis and misunderstands history whose essence is to study complex transformations over time. It is, one might say, a matter of convenience that history concentrates on the data already available, and not on those which the future has not yet made available. Prediction may or may not be desirable to test it, but it emerges automatically from making statements about the continuum between past, present and future, because this implies references to the future; even if many historians may prefer to avoid actually extending their statements forward. To adapt Auguste Comte's phrase, *savoir* is not *pour prévoir* but *prévoir* is part of *savoir*, foreseeing is part of knowing.

And historians are constantly foreseeing, if only retrospectively. Their future happens to be the present or a more recent past compared to a more remote past. The most conventional and 'anti-scientific' historians are perpetually analysing the consequences of situations and events, or alternative counterfactual possibilities, the emergence of one era out of its predecessor. Some who do so most assiduously, like Lord Dacre (Trevor-Roper) in his recent Oxford valedictory, use it to argue against predictability, but they use techniques of prediction to do so. Now the methods elaborated to analyse historical causes, consequences and alternatives with the benefit of the futurologists' ultimate but inaccessible weapon, namely hindsight, are relevant to forecasters, since they are in principle similar. Their value rests not only on the enormous accumulation of actual historical experiences of all kinds which may serve to guide the present; not only on the record of past predictions which may be tested against actual outcomes in order to determine why they were right or wrong; and not only on the very considerable practical experience and judgment which historians have acquired over the generations in pursuing their activities. It rests chiefly on two things: First, historians' forecasts, retrospective though they be, are precisely about the complex and all-embracing reality of human life; about the other things which are never equal, and which are in fact not 'other things', but the system of relationships from which statements about human life in society can never be entirely abstracted. And second, any historical discipline worthy of the name attempts to discover precisely those patterns of interaction in society, those mechanisms and tendencies of change and transformation, and those directions of the transformation in society, which alone provide an

adequate framework for forecasting that is more than what has been called 'statistical projections based on compilations of empirical data within categories of perhaps little theoretical significance.' More even than the sort of imaginative presentiment or '*Abnang*', to use Burckhardt's term which is the historian's equivalent of flying by the seat of one's pants. I do not undervalue it: but it is not enough. And here, if you will excuse a brief commercial, lies the unique value of Marx and those who, whether Marxists or not, adopt a similar approach to historical development.

These predictions by means of history use two methods, generally in combination: the prediction of tendencies by means of generalization, or modelling; and the prediction of actual events or outcomes by means of a sort of path analysis. Predicting the continued decline of the British economy is an example of the first, predicting the future of Mrs. Thatcher's government is an example of the second. Predicting something like the Russian or Iranian revolution (which we happen to know in one case, but not yet in the other) combines the two methods. Both are required, if only because actual events do make a difference to at least some tendencies, as the division of Germany in 1945 has to the analysis of social trends in what are now two very different countries. Now the present margin of uncertainty about future events is so large—even when they can subsequently be shown to have been far from uncertain, like a 'fixed' boxing-match—that we can only narrow it to a set of alternative scenarios. We can also neglect some unpredictables as trivial, but this usually implies a judgment of significance in the light of our questions. Still, many such unpredictables are accepted as insignificant today: we may not know whether an American president will be assassinated, but analysis and experience suggest that it is unlikely to make much difference. Others are commonly accepted as trivial and may be left to the sort of politician for whom a week is a long time in politics and the sort of historian who thirsts to know exactly what Sir Stafford Northcote wrote to R. A. Cross on October 8th 1875. Others plainly can't. Nevertheless, we can do more than merely present the customer with an array of equally probable scenarios, preferably broken down into a series of binary choices, as in the Jewish jokes in which every situation contains two possibilities. This is where the historian's exercises in retrospective prediction can provide guidance.

Was the October Revolution Predictable?

It may be useful at this point to look at a particular exercise in retrospective forecasting in this light: the Russian Revolution, an episode where hindsight may actually be checked against contemporary foresight. Since this inevitably involves some consideration of might-have-beens, such retrospective prediction could be regarded as a form of counter-factual history (i.e. history as it might have happened but did not). So it is, but it ought nevertheless to be distinguished from the commonest and most publicised form of counterfactual speculation in this field, that of the 'cliometricians'. This is illustrated by Fogel's well-known attempt to work out what difference it might have made to the economy of the USA if it had been obliged to develop without railroads.

It is not my object to deny the interest of such cost-benefit analyses of the past—for that is what they amount to—or to discuss their validity. I merely observe that in the form made fashionable in quantitative economic history, they usually have nothing to do with assessing historical probabilities. The American railroads were built, and it cannot be seriously suggested that the option of not building them was in a real sense open in the nineteenth century. Nor is this suggested. A slave economy may have been economically viable, efficient and a good business proposition—I am not entering the debate stimulated by Fogel and Engerman's *Time on the Cross*—but the question whether it was likely to last is not affected by these propositions, only the arguments about its capacity to last. In fact it disappeared everywhere in the nineteenth century, and its decline and fall were confidently and correctly forecast. Forecasting, retrospective or not, is about assessing probabilities, or it is about nothing.

A Russian Revolution was widely expected, irrespective of the particular and unpredictable circumstances of its actual outbreak in 1905 and 1917. Why? Clearly because a structural analysis of Russian society and its institutions led to the belief that Tsarism was unlikely to overcome its internal weaknesses and contradictions. If correct, such an analysis would in principle override minor might-have-beens—as indeed it did. Even if we grant that in theory good policy and able rulers might have done the trick, they could only do so, as it were, by pushing Sisyphus' stone all the way uphill in order to make it roll down in the right direction. In fact, Tsarism had effective policies and good statesmen from time to time and an astonishing record of economic growth, which has misled some liberals into the belief that all might have come right but for accidents such as the war and Lenin. It was not enough. The odds were against Tsarism, even if Lenin as a politician was wise to leave open the possibility that, for example, Stolypin's agrarian policy might have proven successful.

Why did a number of people, against most western aspirations and expectations (including those of Russian Marxists, Lenin among them) come to doubt that a Russian revolution would result in a bourgeois-democratic government of the western type? Because it soon became clear that the liberals or any other middle-class groups were too weak to achieve this solution. Indeed the weakness of the Russian middle class was revealed between 1905 and 1917 at a time when the Russian bourgeoisie was growing much stronger and more self-confident than they had been before 1900. Too confident in 1917, it has been argued by at least one good historian who believes that the radicalization of the urban workers in 1917 was precipitated by an attempt to reimpose control in the factories which it was no longer able to do. Today such forward prediction would be easier, if only because we have learned since 1914 how historically specific the conditions for stable liberal-democratic regimes are, how conditional the commitment of bourgeois and middle strata to such regimes, and how precarious they may be. In the light of these lessons of history—not by any means unpredictable if we remember Burckhardt and other conservative forecasters—we might have considered the possibility of a non-democratic but capitalist alternative to Bolshevism: perhaps a military-bureau-

cratic regime. But given the collapse of the armed forces in 1917 we can see that this was not at all probable.

On the other hand, the actual outcome in October 1917 certainly seemed among the least likely options in 1905 and hardly more likely in February 1917: a Russia committed to install socialism under Bolshevik leadership. Even Marxists unanimously held that the conditions for proletarian revolution in Russia *alone* were simply not present. Kautsky and the Mensheviks argued, logically enough, that the attempt was bound to fail. In any case the Bolsheviks were a minority. So improbable was this outcome that it is still fashionable to ascribe the October revolution entirely to Lenin's decision to make a sort of putsch in the brief period when it had a chance of success. There were of course structural reasons why such an outcome was not as totally implausible as it seemed. We know that Marxist governments have come to power by revolution precisely in the sort of countries Marxists didn't expect them to. (We also know, incidentally, that such revolutions can have quite different outcomes.) Lenin himself had already in 1908 drawn attention to this kind of 'inflammable material in world politics' and anticipated what was later to be called the 'weakest link' theory of revolutionary prospects. However, there was no way of *predicting*, as distinct from hoping for, a Bolshevik victory, and still less lasting success. Nevertheless, predictive analysis was far from impossible. It was indeed the basis of Lenin's policy. It is utterly absurd to see Lenin as a voluntarist. Action was a function of what was possible, and nobody mapped the changing territory on the march more carefully than he did nor with a more ruthless sense of what was impossible. Indeed the Soviet regime survived—and in doing so turned itself into something far from his original expectations—just because, time and again, he recognized what had to be done, like it or not. Even had he wanted to be a voluntarist like Mao, he was in no position to be one in 1917, since he could not make anything whatever happen by taking decisions: he did not automatically control even his party and that party did not control much. It is only *after* revolutionaries have become governments that they can make people do things—within limits which even strong governments do not always recognize.

Inevitability Versus Probability

We need not follow Lenin's analysis, since he was interested in only one outcome, but we can make a parallel analysis. To put it briefly, the basic question in 1917 was not who would take over in Russia, but whether anyone would establish an effective regime. The reasons why the Provisional Government couldn't succeed, failing immediate peace—which raised problems in any case—are clear. The Bolsheviks won: (a) because unlike almost everybody else on the Left they were ready to take over; (b) because they were consistently more ready to recognize and take account of what was happening at the grassroots; (c) because—largely for this reason—they gained control of the situation in Petrograd and Moscow; and only lastly, (d) because at the crucial moment they were ready to seize power. The only alternative to Bolshevism in October was *de facto* anarchy. Various possible

scenarios might be constructed for that situation, the most plausible of which would be a more extreme version of what in fact happened—namely the eventual secession of the marginal regions of the empire, civil war and the establishment of various regional and uncoordinated counter-revolutionary warlord regimes, one of which might eventually have gained control of the capital and attempted the long task of establishing itself as a central government. In short, the choice was between a Bolshevik government and no government.

It is at this point that the fog which conceals the landscape of the future cannot be more than thinned. As Lenin himself saw clearly, the survival of the regime was much more uncertain than its initial establishment. It no longer depended on a form of political 'surfing'—finding the big wave and riding it—but on a conjuncture of domestic and international variables which could not be foreseen. Moreover, in so far as future developments now depended on *policy*—i.e. on conscious, possibly erroneous and certainly variable decisions—the course of the future itself was skewed by their intervention. Thus the Bolshevik decision to set up a new International, but refuse entry to all but those conforming to Bolshevik criteria, might have seemed sensible when other European revolutions seemed imminent or possible in 1919–20; but the split between Social Democrats and Communists and their mutual hostility has remained, creating unforeseen problems for both ever since, in varying and quite different circumstances. Here the difference between foresight and hindsight becomes crucial. At all events prediction is interrupted by passages of darkness which can only be lit up retrospectively, when we know what 'had to happen' simply because nothing else actually happened. To the extent that the survival of the Bolshevik Revolution depended upon international circumstances, one might have put one's money on it from late 1918, although for some months after October 1917 its future was not effectively predictable. On the other hand, given its survival and permanence, prediction came into its own again. Unfortunately I can think of no realistic forecast which ought to have envisaged the long-term future of the USSR as very different from what it has actually become. It is possible to envisage alternative scenarios which would have been very much less cruel and intellectually disastrous, but none which would not have disappointed many of the high hopes of 1917.

The purpose of my brief exercise is not to show that the course of history was inevitable, but to consider the scope and limits of prediction. Such an exercise allows us to identify long-odds outcomes such as that Tsarism could have saved itself, and odds-on outcomes such as a Russian Revolution, a non-liberal post-revolutionary regime and, in broad outline, much of subsequent Soviet development. It allows us to disentangle Lenin's personal contribution from much of the obfuscation which surrounds it. It allows us to identify yes–no situations such as the choice between Bolshevism and no government, and situations with a wide range of options. It explains the reasons for Lenin's confidence about seizing power in October and his uncertainty about maintaining it. It allows us to specify the conditions of survival and their calculability or incalculability. It also allows us to distinguish

between the relative analytical predictability of processes which nobody controls—such as most of Russian history in 1917—and those where the exercise of effective command and planning confuse the issue. I do not share the naive belief of an American sociologist that, because 'social change (is) increasingly both organized and institutionalized . . . the future is partly predictable because it will resemble in part what it is now intended to be.' In fact, the tendencies of Soviet development were and are predictable only to the degree that Soviet policy (given its aims) recognized what had to be done. Alas, what makes human planning, however powerful, so frustrating for prophets as well as politicians, is the contrast between its limited capacity and the limited consequences of 'getting it right', and the potentially enormous consequences of getting it wrong. As Napoleon knew well, one battle lost can sometimes change the situation more than ten battles won. And finally, such an exercise enables us to assess the numerous forecasters in this much predicted field. It is a curious reflection on the vast literature that, so far as I know, it has never been surveyed systematically in order to assess historic predictability, even though it was and is full of past and present forecasts.

The Search for Periodicities

Predicting social trends is in one respect easier than predicting events, since it rests precisely on the discovery which is the basis of all social sciences: that it is possible to generalize about populations and over periods of time without bothering about the shifting tangle of decisions, events, accidents and possibilities—on the ability to say something about the wood without knowing each tree. So far as trends are concerned, this requires a certain minimal span of time. To this extent it can be called long-run as distinct from short-term prediction, though the particular 'long-run' may be comparatively short even by the time-span of human long-term predictions which is limited to a century or so at most. At least I can think of no prediction which is not millennial—in both senses of the word—beyond this. But one familiar drawback of such long-term predictions is that it is almost impossible to assign a proper time-scale to them. We may know what is likely to happen, but not when. That the USA and the USSR would become the giants among the world's powers was correctly predicted by the 1840s, on the grounds of their size and resources, but only a fool would have committed himself to an exact date of, say, 1900.

Some such predictions happen more slowly than most observers expected. For instance the failure of the peasantry to disappear in developed countries could be used as an argument against the mid-19th century prediction that it would. On the other hand, some happen faster than expected. That the division of a vast sector of the world into colonies administered by a handful of states would not last, could be and was predicted. Yet it is doubtful whether many people in the days of Joe Chamberlain could have expected almost the entire rise and disappearance of this variant of imperialism to take place within the lifetime of a single man—I am thinking of Winston Churchill who lived from 1874 to 1965. Some are both faster and slower than is predictable. The speed with which the peasantry began to disappear

after its lengthy and successful survival is astonishing. In Colombia, where in 1960 the rural population was estimated at some 67% of the total, it had halved or more than halved by the late 1970s. Such predictions are significant even if we don't know when they will come true. If we believe that the chances of the Jews establishing themselves permanently by conquest in a Middle Eastern enclave are not much greater in the long run than the chances of the Crusaders were, then this has obvious policy implications for those who care about their survival, whether we can set dates or not. However, the point I wish to make is simply that the question 'what will happen' is methodologically quite different from the question 'when it will happen'.

The only chronological predictions I know which command some confidence are those based on some regular periodicity behind which we suspect an explicable mechanism, even when we don't understand it. Economists are the greatest searchers for such periodicities, although demography also implies some (if only through the succession and maturation of generations and age-cohorts). Other social sciences have also claimed to have discovered periodicities, but few of them are of much help except in very specialized forecasting. For example, if the anthropologist Kroeber is correct, the dimensions of women's dresses 'alternate with fair regularity between maxima and minima which in most cases average about fifty years apart.' (I express no opinion about this claim whatever its salience to the rag trade.) However, at least one species of periodicity has shown a wider, if largely enigmatic relevance. It seems that the world economy has, since the late-18th century—some suggest even earlier—been subject to a fairly regular succession of 25–30 year cycles of expansion, prosperity and confidence, followed by symmetrical periods of economic distress. We are in one of the latter today. I know of no explanation of these so-called 'Kondratiev long waves' which is widely accepted, and even their existence has been doubted by sceptics. However, they do enable us to make predictions not only about the economy, but also, in a more general form, about the social, political and cultural scenes which accompany the alternating cycles. The periodization of 19th and 20th century history which historians of Europe find most useful does, in fact, coincide largely with Kondratiev waves. On their strength I am prepared, for example, to predict that the new upswing will hardly make itself felt much before the 1990s, if the world economy survives that long. Unfortunately for forecasters, such predictive aids are rare.

The Limits of Theory

Leaving chronology aside, the historian is in fact recognized as essential even to the most common and powerful form of prediction in the social sciences, which is based on theoretical propositions or models (basically of the mathematical type) applied to any kind of reality. This is both invaluable and inadequate. Invaluable, because, if we establish a logically compelling relationship between variables, argument must cease. If mankind uses up limited resources at a faster rate than they can be replaced or substituted by alternatives, then sooner or later they will run out, and the only question, as with oil reserves, is when. No prediction beyond the purely empirical is possible

without constructions based on such propositions. But they are inadequate because by themselves they are too general to throw much light on concrete situations, and any attempt to use them directly for forecasting is therefore doomed. That is why David Glass pointed out that demography, which is, I suppose with economics and linguistics, the most developed of the social sciences by the fashionable criterion of similarity to physics, has had a terrible predictive record. Thus the basic Malthusian proposition that population cannot permanently rise beyond the limits imposed by the availability of the means of subsistence is both undeniable and valuable. However, by itself it can tell us *nothing* about the past, present and future relationship between population growth and the means of subsistence. It cannot predict or retrospectively explain a crisis describable in Malthusian terms such as the Irish famine. If we want to explain why Ireland had such a crisis in the 1840s and Lancashire didn't, we cannot do so with the Malthusian model, but must do so in terms of factors analyzable without reference to it. Conversely, if we forecast a famine in Somalia, it is not on the tautological ground that people starve if there is not enough food for them. In short, demographic theory can make conditional predictions which are not forecasts, and forecasts which are not based on its models. On what are they based?

In so far as Malthus himself forecast tendencies—wrongly—he relied on certain historical data, on population growth and on assigning would-be empirical magnitudes, which have proved arbitrary, to future increases in food productivity, which have proved unrealistic. The demographic or economic forecaster must not only translate his variables into real quantities, which is problematical enough: he must also constantly go outside his own theoretical analysis and his own specialist domain into the broad territory of total history, past or present. Why did western fertility cease to fall after the 1930s, thus forcing the revision of all projections of future population? It is the historian's business to answer such questions, and in doing so to throw light on possible future changes. Why do some now believe that the rate of demographic growth in third world countries may slow down with industrialization and urbanization? Not only because there is some evidence that it has done so (i.e. historical data), but because of a supposed analogy with the demographic history of developed countries (i.e. a historical generalization). Fortunately demographers are aware of all this; more so than economists, if one compares the flourishing discipline of historical demography with the retrospective econometrics which passes for history among them. David Glass, I need not remind you, held a post for much of his life as a sociologist and not demographer, and, apart from his wide interests in other fields, was a strikingly erudite and acute historian. He was a great demographer because he knew that 'the competence of demographers is relevant to only part of the field. The main burden of work will have to fall upon historians and sociologists'.

I am bound to say, however, that historians, like social scientists, are fairly helpless when confronted with the future, not only because we all are, but because they have no clear idea of what exactly the *ensemble* or system they are investigating is, and—in spite of Marx' superb

pioneering—exactly how its various elements interact. What exactly is 'society' (singular or plural) which is our concern? Ecologists may claim to delimit their eco-systems, but few students of human society, except some anthropologists dealing with small, isolated and 'primitive' communities, claim they can do the same; especially not in the modern world. We grope our way. The most historians can claim is that, unlike most social sciences, we cannot side-step the problems of our ignorance. Unlike them, we are not tempted into striving for fake precision in imitation of the more prestigious natural sciences; and that, after all, we and the anthropologists have an unparalleled knowledge of the varieties of human social experience. And perhaps also that we alone in the field of human studies *must* think in terms of historical change, interaction and transformation. History alone provides orientation and anyone who faces the future without it is not only blind but dangerous, especially in the era of high technology.

The Uses of History

Let me give you an extreme example. Last June, you may recall, the American observational system reported that Russian missiles were on their way and for several minutes the US nuclear arsenal automatically moved towards action, until it all turned out to be a computer error. Now if the porter were to come into this theatre *now* to inform us that nuclear war had broken out, it would not take three minutes for even pessimistic human beings to conclude that he must be wrong, and for essentially historical reasons. It is most unlikely that a world war would break out without some preliminary crisis, however short, or some other premonitory signs, and our experience of the past months, weeks or even days has simply not shown any of this evidence. If we were in the middle of something like the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, of course, we might be less confident. In short, we have a rational model in our minds on how world wars break out or are likely to, based on a combination of analysis and information about the past. On this basis we assess probabilities while not necessarily excluding possibilities unless they are so remote as not to be worth taking into account. I don't suppose that Canada today spends much time planning against a war with the United States, or, in spite of appearances, Britain against a French invasion. Failing such assessments, however, we are tempted to assume that *anything* can happen at any time—an assumption which also underlies horror movies and the expectations of UFO fans. Or, if we wish to confine ourselves to cases where practical precautions can be taken, we follow the equally irrational procedure of formulating a 'worst case' and preparing for that, especially when we shall be blamed as functionaries if things go wrong. Equally irrational because the worst case is not more likely than the best case, and there is a substantial difference between taking precautions against the worst cases and taking steps to meet that case: for example in 1940 when the British government wanted to put all German and Austrian refugees behind barbed wire.

The psychological equivalent of 'worst case' thinking is paranoia or hysteria. Indeed it is at times of tension and fear such as those that we live in, that hysteria and ahistoricity combine. The worst is expected,

not only among those professionally committed to envisaging it—like military men, secret services and the thriller-writers they so often imitate—but also among quite sensible people who develop geopolitical fits at the thought of Afghanistan or some Cuban (as distinct from French) troops in some parts of Africa. And, more seriously, our failure to understand the world becomes mechanized, and we set up automated systems geared to the worst case, which are set in motion by signs which mistakenly read 'attack'. Short of the intervention of practical historians, only equally automatic technical cross-checks showing that the signs have been mechanically misread can stop the process of destruction. These false alarms are, in a sense, the hair-raising *reductio ad absurdum* of facing the future ahistorically. I don't actually expect that, if or when war breaks out, it will be triggered off by a blind technical malfunction. But the fact that it could, and just possibly might, does illustrate the indispensable role of historical rationality in assessing the future and the human action required to meet it.

At this point the historian should cease to hide behind generalities. There is a time for commenting on other people's bets, and a time to put one's own money down. If asked whether there will be a world war, I find it impossible to avoid the conclusion that such a war is extremely likely and the steps taken, or likely to be taken, to avoid it will be ineffective. This does not mean that it will *certainly* take place. Outsiders sometimes win. Scenarios for avoiding such a war can be constructed, but not at present with much confidence. I also find it difficult, though not impossible, to conceive that such a war (i.e. one in which the USA and the USSR fight each other) will fail to become nuclear, in spite of the obvious desire of both super-powers not to commit mutual suicide. The chief reason is that the USA at present seems incapable of waging any global war except a nuclear one. However, the outlook would be less dark if it were once again to make itself capable of waging conventional war, a difficult but not impossible task.¹ Furthermore, I think it highly probable that, for reasons of self-preservation, a considerable number of states will try to keep out of a world war and a number will succeed in doing so. The best chance of avoiding a nuclear war would seem to lie in making this reluctance to join the international suicide pact as evident as possible before it happens. To withdraw from the zone of nuclear arms and bases is a practicable option for several countries including Britain. It is impossible at present to predict whether this option will be taken. As for the consequence of a global nuclear war, prediction is beside the point. No sane person in Europe or North America is comforted by the observation that, in all likelihood, it will not wipe out all human life or civilization on the globe. A world nuclear war will cancel all previous bets.

The Responsibility of Historians

How shall I conclude? Historians are not prophets in the sense that they can or should try to write the headlines of next year's or next

¹ The abstention from chemical warfare in 1939-45 is a precedent; but it was made possible by the belief that the war could be effectively waged with other weapons.

century's BBC world service news bulletins. Neither are we or ought we to be in the eschatological department of the prophecy business. I know that some thinkers, including historians, have seen the process of history as the unfolding of human destiny to some happy or unhappy end in the future. This kind of belief is morally preferable to the view, so common in American social sciences of the confident 1950s, that human destiny has already found its resting-place in some current society right now, with Omaha as its new Jerusalem. It is certainly not so easily falsifiable; but it is unhelpful. True, man is, in the words of the philosopher Ernst Bloch, a hoping animal. We dream forward. There is plenty of reason to. Historians, like other human beings, are entitled to have their idea of a desirable future for mankind, to fight for it and to be cheered up if they discover that history seems to be going their way, as it sometimes does. In any case it is not a good sign of the way the world is going when men lose confidence in the future, and *Götterdämmerung* scenarios replace utopias. However, the historian's job of finding out where we have come from and whither we are going ought not to be affected *as a job* by whether we like the prospective results.

Let me put it in paradoxical form. It is equally unhelpful to dismiss Marx because we dislike his demonstration that capitalism and bourgeois society are temporary historical phenomena, and to embrace him simply because we are for socialism, which he thought would succeed them. I believe Marx discerned some basic tendencies with profound insight; but we do not know actually what they will bring. Like so much of the future predicted in the past, when it comes it may be unrecognizable, not because the predictions were wrong but because we were wrong to put a particular face and costume to the interesting stranger whose arrival we were told to expect. I don't say we should go as far as Schumpeter, who was both a conservative and a great respecter of Marx' extraordinary analytical vision, and claim that 'to say that Marx . . . admits of interpretation in a conservative sense is only saying that he can be taken seriously'. But we should remember that hope and prediction, though inseparable, are not the same.

This still leaves plenty that historians can contribute to our exploration of the future: to discovering what human beings can and cannot do about it; to establish the settings and consequently the limits, potentialities and consequences of human action; to distinguish between the foreseeable and the unforeseeable and between different kinds of foresight. For one thing, they can help to bring into disrepute those absurd and dangerous exercises in constructing mechanical automata for prediction, popular among some seekers after scientific status: people who—I am again quoting a real sociologist—think the way to predict revolutions is to quantify the question 'how extensive and rapid must early modernization be in order for it to produce social revolution' by means of 'the collection of comparative data, both cross-sectional and temporal'. It is not Marxists who do this. They can and ought to bring into disrepute the even more dangerous exercises in futurology which think out the unthinkable as an alternative to thinking out the thinkable. They can keep the statistical extrapolators in check. They can actually say something about what is likely to

happen and even more about what isn't. They won't be listened to much—that is of the essence of history. But just possibly they might be listened to a bit more if they actually spent more time in assessing and improving their capacity to say something about the future, and in advertising it a bit better. In spite of everything, they have something to advertise.

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History Workshop Series

PEOPLE'S HISTORY AND SOCIALIST THEORY

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The articles are drawn from a History Workshop held at Ruskin College, Oxford in December 1979, where many of the issues discussed in this book were rehearsed. The papers have been extended in the light of the discussion and criticism directed at them, and bibliographies have been added to make the book helpful to those who will use it as an introduction to the work of socialist historians in Britain.

CONTENTS

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Trade Unions and the Capitalist State

It is a matter of considerable irony, as well as a cause for concern, that the otherwise valuable and exciting development of Marxist theorizations of the capitalist state in the past decade have only tangentially noted, and have largely failed to address systematically, one of the most significant political developments pertaining to the working class in the modern period: the emergence within the democratic capitalist state of new political structures which articulate trade unions with state administration and business associations in a broad range of economic policy-making. The fact that this development has occurred in a period of trade-union industrial strength, and of increasing expression of class conflict *via* official and unofficial trade-union struggles, has only served to underline the relative weakness of Marxist theorizations of the nature of trade unionism in advanced capitalism and its relationship with the bourgeois-democratic state.* Over the course of what might be called 'the decade of the theory of the state', Marxist theorists clearly attempted to move beyond the abstract formalism and high level of generality that tended to characterize earlier work

In particular, texts such as Therborn's, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules?*, and Poulantzas', *State, Power, Socialism*, explicitly concerned themselves with tracing and delineating the changing patterns of bourgeois-democratic rule in the monopoly capitalist era. The significant changes were broadly seen to entail: a shift in the locus of decision-making from parliament to the technocratic/executive apparatus of the state; the fusion of the state at this level with the top echelons of capitalist enterprise; and the general breaking down of the public-private boundaries that previously characterized bourgeois democracy. Although these observations, taken in themselves, were by no means new, either within or without the Marxist problematic, their systematic location within a Marxist theory of the state was much to be applauded.

Nevertheless, the pivotal role of trade-union integration within the network of policy-making apparatuses linking the state executive and bureaucracy with private corporate management was either elided or merely treated in passing as a subsidiary aspect of the general development of an interventionist state under monopoly capitalism. At most, we saw a rather mechanical extension of the dynamics that connect the state with monopoly capital to the integration of working-class organizations. The specific dynamics and the particular importance (for the attenuation of liberal democracy¹) of the incorporation of trade unions, and the contradictions (for both unions and the state) of this incorporation, were not elucidated. However important the general attention that has been paid to what Poulantzas called in his last work, 'the statization of social life' overcoming the 'institutionalized dissociation between public and private which is the cornerstone of traditional representative democracy',² this is a phenomena which cannot be examined only in terms of its implications for parties and civil liberties, while leaving aside the specificity of trade-union structures. A distinction surely needs to be drawn between the statization of bourgeois-dominated spheres of civil society and the statization of working-class organizations. For Marxists, the latter process might be thought to be a matter of central strategic importance requiring separate and extensive theoretical disquisition and empirical research.³

* The first draft of this paper was presented at the International Conference on the State and the Economy, Brindale College, University of Toronto, in December 1979. I would like to thank Gösta Esping-Anderson, Sam Gindin, Ralph Miliband, John Myles, George Ross and especially Sidney Tarrow for their constructive criticisms, although some of them will still disagree with many of the arguments presented here.

¹ As such, Adam Przeworski's definition of democracy is appropriately broader than those of Poulantzas and Therborn, who concentrate on elections and parties: 'Capitalist democracy is a system in which the institutionalization of surplus as the form in which a part of the product becomes withheld from the immediate producers forms the basis for somewhat indeterminate struggles over the distribution of product. The indeterminacy of struggles over the realization of short-term material interests is the condition of hegemony since it leads to the organization of wage-earners as participants in the struggles over distribution and allows their interest to be realized within some limits. Capitalist democracy at the same time reduces class struggles to struggles over the realization of immediate interests and generates struggles over the immediate interests.' (A. Przeworski, 'Toward a Theory of Capitalist Democracy', mimeo, 1977, p. 7.)

² N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, NLB, London 1978, p. 238.

³ It is perhaps indicative of the generality of the problem here (to avoid appearing partisan) that when Miliband in his latest book also discusses the 'statization' of

Unfortunately there has been a traditional failure amongst Marxists to address the relationship between trade unionism and the state in a rigorous dialectical fashion. Therborn's valuable perception, for instance, that as a collective mass organization, 'the labour movement is organized in a fundamentally different way from the state bureaucracy or a capitalist firm,' was not carried over to examine the contradictions that arise when trade-union representatives join state personnel and capitalist management in 'institutionalized joint bodies'.⁴ For his part, Poulantzas made little attempt to clarify the significance of his passing observation that '“reformist” trade unions are now directly inserted in the (state) administrative structure'.⁵ Particularly in light of his generic definition of the capitalist state as already including (as 'state ideological apparatuses') the trade-union movement, and given his simultaneous belief that even a reformist organization remains a 'working-class phenomena, with its own special links to the working class',⁶ one might have expected an elaboration of this tension and its implications for the development of the class struggle. In fact I think Therborn's and Poulantzas' attitudes are symptomatic of a broader 'politician' syndrome which has characterized Marxist theorizations of the state, and which has tended to see trade unions as 'less important' because they are geared to short-term demands which are neither explicitly political or revolutionary.⁷ Particularly in a period when the class struggle has been *increasingly* industrial in form, and when industrial military has accompanied the incorporation of trade unions in the state apparatus, this 'politician' syndrome forecloses the possibility of a full analysis of the balance of class forces in the contemporary conjuncture and of an assessment of the contradictions arising from changes taking place in the bourgeois-democratic state.

1. Corporatism and Marxism

Despite the weakness of Marxist theories of the state in dealing with

civil society, the example he concentrates on, like Poulantzas, is the communications industry—already a bourgeois-dominated sphere. See R. Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, Oxford 1977, pp. 56-7.

⁴ G. Therborn, *What Does The Ruling Class Do When It Rules?*, NLB, London 1978, pp. 57, 89, 107-8.

⁵ Poulantzas, pp. 224-5.

⁶ Poulantzas, 'The Capitalist State: A Reply to Miliband and Laclau', NLB 95, Jan./Feb., 1976, p. 69.

⁷ Cf., in this respect, Giovanni Arrighi's comments on: '... the traditional Marxist point of view that, in the long run, capitalist accumulation tends to engender a progressive weakening of the bargaining position of labour *vis-à-vis* capital—a weakening that can be countered only by a *political* advance of the working class. It is my view that the events of the past decade contradict this point of view. Neither the strength exhibited by the workers' movement during the struggles of the second half of the sixties, which precipitated the crisis, nor the capacity of resistance to the blackmail of unemployment demonstrated as the crisis unfolded during the seventies, can be easily ascribed to factors of *political* consciousness and organization. One can do so only on the basis of the truism that the class struggle is always a political struggle. Otherwise it must be observed that the transformation of the political organizations of the working class into instruments for the containment rather than stimulation and support of industrial conflict has been most rapid and evident precisely during this past decade—without a *significant* simultaneous growth of alternative political organizations.' G. Arrighi, 'Towards a Theory of Capitalist Crisis', NLB 111, Sept./Oct., 1978, p. 23.

the contradictory phenomena of trade-union incorporation in the contemporary phase of capitalism, this question has not gone totally unexamined by Marxist writers. In particular, an increasing number have sought, under the rubric of the concept of 'corporatism,' to examine both the 'statization of civil society' in general and, more specifically, the dynamics of trade-union integration and the contradictions to which it is subject.⁸ Since 'corporatism' is conventionally associated with state forms specific to fascism or its authoritarian variants, it is essential to establish the grounds for applying the term to contemporary bourgeois-democratic regimes. As a minimal definition, I suggest that corporatism should be seen in this context as *a political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates organized socio-economic producer groups through a system of representation and cooperative mutual interaction at the leadership level and mobilization and social control at the mass level.* Corporatism is understood here as an actual political structure, not merely an ideology. The etymological origins of the term certainly are to be found in the history of ideology, above all in those currents of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century thought which decried class conflict and individualist competition, and promulgated schemes for 'class harmony' and 'organic unity' through functional (often vocational) representation at the political level.⁹ But while certain ideologies (and not necessarily explicitly corporatist ones—social democracy, for example) may be facilitative to the establishment of corporatist structures, ideas need to be distinguished from actual forms and processes. The political structure in question may be characterized in terms of an actual linkage between the state and functional interest groups (especially trade unions and business associations) constituted by institutionalized representation in economic policy making; interaction among the groups themselves in this process (in contrast with the one-to-one relationship between interest groups and the state normally constitutive of pressure-group politics); and an element of state control over the groups whereby their autonomy is limited and they are employed as agencies of mobilization or administration for state policy.

The employment of corporatism in the above sense certainly marks a break with conventional Marxist discourse, which has tended to define corporatism in three quite different ways. It has, first of all, been

⁸ See L. Panitch, 'The Development of Corporatism in Liberal Democracies', *Comparative Political Studies*, x, 1, (April 1977); C. Offe and H. Wicenthal, 'Two Logics of Collective Action', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 1, 1979, and C. Offe, 'The Attribution of Political Status to Interest Groups', in S. Berger (ed.), *Interest Groups in Western Europe*, Cambridge 1980; B. Jessop, 'Corporatism, Parliamentarism and Social Democracy', in P. Schmitter and G. Lehmbruch, *Trends Towards Corporatist Intermediation*, London and Beverly Hills 1979, and 'Capitalism and Democracy: The Best Possible Political Shell?', in G. Littlejohn (ed.), *Power and the State*, London 1978; Nigel Harris, *Competition and Corporate Society*, London 1972; G. Esping-Anderson, Roger Friedland and Erik Olin Wright, 'Modes of Class Struggle and the Capitalist State', *Kapitalistate*, 4-5, Summer 1976.

⁹ See R. H. Bowen, *German Theories of the Corporate State*, New York 1947; M. H. Elbow, *French Corporative Theory 1784-1948*, New York 1966. For a particularly interesting example of corporatism in social-democratic thought, see Peter Dodge, *Beyond Marxism: The Faith and Works of Hendrik de Man*, The Hague 1977, and *A Documentary Study of Hendrik de Man, Socialist Critic of Marxism*, Princeton 1979.

commonly employed to characterize, in Gramscian fashion, a certain *ideological* condition of the working classes, whereby a defensive, sectionalized class exhibits a subordinate ideology and practice in polar contrast to a hegemonic orientation. Alternatively, the term is often employed to connote an actual political structure, but one confined exclusively to fascist regimes.¹⁰ Finally, corporatism is often treated by Marxists entirely as a (false) ideological construct, which cannot be dissociated from its origins in corporatist ideology. In this last usage, any attempt to employ corporatism as an analytical tool to capture the reality of a given society is seen as inevitably tainted by corporatist ideology, carrying with it the assumption of the desirability and possibility of securing class harmony under the aegis of a neutral state within capitalism. This would rule out the possibility of employing the term within Marxist discourse to denote an actual process or structure which reproduces class domination on these premises.

In so far as recent theorizations of corporatism mark a significant break with the past, and employ the term descriptively or analytically, there is no necessary normative connection between the use of the concept in Marxist analysis and those aspects of corporatist ideology which originally constituted the term. The questions of whether, why and with what consequence corporatist structures develop within the bourgeois-democratic state becomes a matter not of definitional *fiat*, but of concrete historico-empirical investigation. To be sure, such questions need not be inserted into a Marxist problematic: just as 'democracy' and 'class' are contested concepts in social science, so too with 'corporatism'. Thus, although corporatism has been universally contrasted with pluralism to emphasize the weakness of the latter's assumptions of multiple group competition *vis-à-vis* a neutral state, it has remained encumbered in various bourgeois theorizations with assumptions of equivalence of power and influence between labour and capital in corporatist political structures. More recently its use has involved the argument that state intervention in the economy entails the actual replacement of capitalism with a corporatist economic system defined by 'state control over profit.'¹¹ Obviously, as located in such approaches, the concept of corporatism is incompatible with a Marxist problematic. But it will be noted that the definition of corporatism offered above (which is proximate to, although not identical with, the approach of other Marxist writers) does *not* assume equivalence of power or influence between the groups or the classes based on them, nor the neutrality of the state *vis-à-vis* them. Nor does it assume that corporatist political structures are in any sense desirable, or even stable. On the contrary, by situating corporatism *explicitly* within the parameters of advanced

¹⁰ Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, p. 233. Thus Poulantzas limits the term, *pure* political structure, only to various examples of fascism and corporatist-type military dictatorships. For him 'a corporatist state . . . is an exceptional form of bourgeois state' in which the dominant political role is played by a repressive apparatus ('the fascist party, the army, the political police') distinct from a corporatist bureaucratic administration.

¹¹ I undertake a critique of these positions in 'Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry', *British Journal of Sociology*, XXXI, 2, June 1980. Cf. J. Westergaard, 'Class, Inequality and "Corporatism"', in A. Hunt (ed.), *Class and Class Structure*, London 1977.

capitalist society, it invites investigation of the manner in which corporatist structures reflect, mediate or modify the class struggle.

The Locus of Hegemony

Thus a Marxist conception of the development of corporatist structures *within* the bourgeois-democratic state raises significant questions for the theory of the state under advanced capitalism. It opens, first of all, the question of whether and in what sense parliamentary structures need be seen as the *linchpin* of hegemonic domination, constituted on the basis of the mediation 'between the ruling and ruled classes in universalistic (i.e., not overtly class-specific) terms'.¹² For it would appear that the very preservation of bourgeois democracy in the context of extensive state intervention and a strong labour movement under monopoly capitalism entails a supplementation (but not a displacement) of parliamentary and party forms of representation/mediation (which formally dissociate state and class) with corporatist forms of representation/mediation *which are explicitly class-based*. Corporatism is a mode of representation/mediation appropriate to certain forms of state intervention in the economy since it is constituted on the basis of groups arising directly on the social division of labour. Jessop sees it as a system of representation which is particularly suited to state economic intervention because it 'entitles the political organs of capital and labour to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies concerned with accumulation so that responsibility for such intervention is placed on those immediately affected rather than mediated through parliamentary representation and rational-legal administration'.¹³ Corporatist structures are prone to contradictions and limitations, however, due to their inability to eliminate class conflict over the labour process and distribution. For this reason, and because of the concentration of corporatist structures on economic intervention; parliaments, elections and pressure-group politics continue to remain important sites of representation and hegemonic control.

Secondly, Marxist approaches to corporatism lay the basis for distinguishing the different consequences of corporatist integration for trade unions *versus* business associations, determined by the effect their class location has on their organizational structures and their relations with the state. This is not only a product of the design of state policy *vis-à-vis* the two classes but also a product of the different internal structures of the respective organizations.¹⁴ Trade-union power is based on the effectiveness of its collective organization. But the power of capital is based on control of the means of production, and this control is not transferred to the interest associations of business by individual firms. This means that these associations' incorporation *via* state structures is less significant for capital than is the incorporation of trade unions for labour, precisely because these associations play a less critical role for their class as agencies of struggle, of representation

¹² The quotation is from Therborn, p. 170. But see in particular Perry Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *NLR* 100, Nov. 1976/Jan. 1977, p. 28.

¹³ Jessop, pp. 199-200.

¹⁴ This point is particularly well made in Offe and Wicksenthal, *passim*.

and of social control than do trade unions for their class, not least because of the role of the capitalist state itself in cementing a common interest among capital's competing fractions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a Marxist approach to corporatism within bourgeois democracies suggests that the debate over the scope of the state among Marxists in recent years has been fundamentally miscast. Two static positions were originally put forward: either the state was defined according to the constitutional legal distinction between public and private (Miliband), or all institutions engaged in the *function* of reproducing class domination ideologically and politically were identified with the state (Althusser, Poulantzas). When cast in these static terms, Miliband's position was unassailable, maintaining the notion of separation of state and civil society characteristic of bourgeois-democratic as opposed to fascist regimes, and viewing the state not as a functional activity pervading all society (including the family) but as a specific *instance*.¹⁵ To be sure, by the late 1970's this debate had largely been 'resolved', and the static dimension cast aside, by a common approach on the part of Miliband and Poulantzas towards identifying a process of statization under monopoly capitalism whereby the distinctions between state and civil society are increasingly blurred. This is what theorizations of corporatism have been identifying for some time. But it would be a mistake to see the process as a *linear one*, inevitably the product of monopoly capitalism, as implied by most Marxist theories of the state and by many theorists of modern corporatism. An examination of the development of corporatist structures within bourgeois democracy suggests, at least as regards the incorporation of trade unions, that the scope of the state is not something which can be defined *a priori* nor its expansion predicted in a linear fashion. Rather the scope of the state is *an object of struggle itself*. As I shall attempt to show in the next section, even when corporatist structures are established they remain unstable in face of repeated struggles about whether trade unions are to become mere agencies of the state or preserve their role as autonomous working-class institutions. It is precisely the *open and unresolved* nature of this conflict over the scope of the state as pertaining to corporatist political structures that distinguishes them from their brethren in fascist regimes.¹⁶

¹⁵ E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, NLB, London 1977, p. 21.

¹⁶ Keith Middlemas, whose important book on the development of corporatism in Britain tends far too much towards portraying the power of labour and capital as balanced in corporatist structures, has nevertheless come close to capturing the significance of defining the state in terms of struggles over its scope. Referring to the *RIC* and *CBI* as 'governing institutions', he writes: 'The modern state is composed not only of government and state apparatus but includes the governing institutions. . . . [But] the governing institutions are not subsumed into a pyramid of authority, within fixed limits of activity, exercising power only in so far as it has been delegated by the state. The state exists effectively in these fields only because they have associated themselves with it; yet they retain . . . freedom always to respond to their own membership (a factor which vitiates, in advance, the "corporate state"). . . .' And regarding the continuing struggle over the scope of the state implied in this arrangement, he writes: 'Only if that struggle is abandoned is there need to fear the thing which was not buried by the military verdict of 1945, renewed, under another name by governments whose skill at harmonizing clashing wills would ignore or subordinate the institutions' responsiveness to membership which, in the last resort, as much as that of parties, sustains democracy.' *Politics in Industrial Society, The Experience of the British System Since 1911*, London 1979, pp. 460-1, 463.

A Socialist Corporate State?

The failure to recognize the capitalist dynamic entailed in the growth of these new corporatist structures (however many new contradictions they may sow) has produced its own misguided political colloraries. For there has been an increasingly visible tendency to extrapolate the struggle *over* the incorporation of working-class organizations into the capitalist state, into a struggle *within* corporatist forms, if not to *transform* the state, then to enhance considerably working-class power. In this sense, it has been suggested that in so far as the union leadership 'maintains close ties to the working class and remain a legitimate instrument of real working-class organizations', this not only 'undermines the planning functions of corporatism' but 'brings class struggle into the administrative heart of the state apparatus itself'.¹⁷ From this it is but a short step to the kind of view put forward recently by the British Marxist economist and left-Labourite, Geoff Hodgson: 'Corporatism means state control. It therefore raises the question of who controls the state. . . . It is important, therefore, to develop the struggle for working-class control of production at the workplace level, and working-class control of planning and investment policy, at both the local and national level. It is also vital to defend and extend existing civil liberties, democratic rights and democratic institutions, even if this means the defence of institutions which could be regarded as bourgeois-democratic. Such questions of strategy could determine the precise flavour of a future corporatist state. And that, after all, is a vitally important question. For upon it depends the possibility of mobilising the forces for the socialist transformation of society and the eradication of a system which has meant alienation, conflict and misery from its birth to its death.'¹⁸

It is precisely this image of a *socialist corporate state*—which returns full circle to a purely instrumentalist view of the state, whereby the state apparatuses can be 'captured' intact by the working class—that has made many Marxists rightly wary of employing the concept of corporatism for analyzing the bourgeois-democratic state. It not only assumes that the working class can unify itself hegemonically on corporatist terrain, but fails to understand that corporatist political structures (there can be no such thing as a 'corporatist state' given the necessarily partial nature of corporatist structures in both bourgeois democracies and fascist regimes) are a form of capitalist domination. Long before power can be won on this terrain, the structures will either be dismembered by the state and the bourgeoisie, or they will be turned into repressive facsimiles of their fascist counterparts. As I attempt to show in the following sketch of the development of contemporary corporatist forms, one of their paramount characteristics is precisely their dissonance with rank-and-file activity or working-class power.

¹⁷ G. Esping-Anderson, et. al., p. 197. Offe and Wlesenthal, and Jessop offer virtually identical formulations.

¹⁸ G. Hodgson, *The Economic Background to Unemployment: The 1930's and the 1970's*, A Clause 4 Pamphlet, 52 Dovey St., Liverpool, n.d.

II. The Parameters of Modern Corporatism

The development of political structures which integrate trade unions with the state executive/bureaucracy and associations of business in framing, legitimating and administering public policy cannot be read off directly from the advent of monopoly capitalism and the necessarily enhanced role of the state in fostering capital accumulation. Were monopoly capitalism itself a sufficient condition for explaining the emergence of corporatist structures, one would have expected to find such structures most highly developed precisely in that society which has been the world centre of monopoly capitalism in the modern era—the United States. Instead corporatist structures in the United States are comparatively *least* developed. Conventional interest group lobbying *vis-à-vis* the legislature still plays a major role, and labour representation *vis-à-vis* bureaucratic policy making is largely confined to the Department of Labor, a site which occupies a lowly place in the hierarchy of state apparatuses. However great the incidence of class collaboration in America, its practice is little elaborated in the institutional field of the central administrative apparatus of the state, where trade unions are largely excluded from participation in policy making. Similarly, were the incidence of state intervention in the economy itself the determining variable, one would have expected France, with its extensive state economic planning, or Italy, with its extensive public ownership, to exhibit highly developed corporatist state structures. Instead, these societies are precisely marked by the comparative distance of the trade-union movement from the state apparatus.

Arrighi has argued recently that the central dynamic of the monopoly stage of capitalism is located in the contradictory effects which capital accumulation has on the working class. While increasingly subordinating labour to capital, capital concentration simultaneously increases the strength of the working class by concentrating and centralizing it and thus developing its collective industrial power and solidarity. The value of this mode of analysis, as I have argued before, is that the tendency to capitalist crisis is not located abstractly in mechanical formulations of the changing organic composition of capital, but is located centrally in the class struggle in the form of the capacity of the working class to resist increases in the rate of exploitation. But insofar as we are attempting to explain concretely the factors generating capitalist crisis and the changing form of the bourgeois-democratic state as it tries to counter-act them, we are still operating at too great a level of generality. As Arrighi himself admitted in a postscript to his article, his presentation of the 'trend towards a long-term structural reinforcement of the working class' suffered from its 'linear and uniform character,' by failing to introduce distinctions which would identify the uneven development of working-class strength and medium-term oscillations of that strength.¹⁹ As regards the establishment of corporatist structures, where and when this occurs can only be explained in terms of such uneven development and medium-term oscillations.

¹⁹ Arrighi, pp. 23–4; cf. L. Panitch, 'Profits and Politics: Labour and the Crisis of British Capitalism', *Politics and Society*, VII, 4, 1977.

The Role of Labour Markets

The critical factor accounting for the development of corporatist state structures, at least in the first two decades after the Second World War, appears to have been the level of employment, and relatedly the commitment of the state to maintaining a high-employment fiscal and monetary policy. This in turn largely reflected the extent of the *political* strength of the working class and its allies on the question of 'full employment', although the conditions favouring rapid economic growth set the framework for the extent of this victory.²⁰ Within the context of the general trend toward the structural strengthening of the working class in the monopoly capitalist era, it was the attenuation of the reserve army of labour as a result of nearly full employment in particular societies that critically further strengthened the organized working class at the industrial level. And as the state intertwined with corporate management to facilitate the restructuring of capital necessary for accumulation and economic growth, what largely dictated the absorption of trade unions into this policy-making network was the extent to which high employment closed off the possibility of securing the necessary rate of exploitation *via* labour market mechanisms alone. Where the labour movement was too weak or too divided to secure an effective commitment to full employment from the state, the expansion of the state's role in the economy occurred *without* the unions' participation.

This was the case in the United States where the 1946 Employment Act was passed only after the commitment to maintaining full employment was emasculated from the originally proposed 'Full Employment Bill', and where unemployment throughout the postwar period (until the 1970s) ran at almost twice the rate of Britain or the Scandinavian countries. A similar situation prevailed in Italy, France and Germany until the beginning of the 1960's, although for somewhat different structural and political reasons. In each of these countries a deflationary programme was pursued in the immediate postwar period. In Italy unemployment hovered between 10% and 15% throughout the 1950s. Corporatist proposals for union integration only surfaced after the emergence of the tight labour market and the widespread militancy and wage-gains of 1961-2. In West Germany, throughout the 1950s state economic policy was conducted as though Keynes had never been heard of, and the DGB's demands for participation in economic policy making was largely ignored. It was only after unemployment fell dramatically in the early 1960s (to below 1%) and the bargaining position of unions was strengthened considerably (with irregular but notable expressions of strike activity) that the state turned towards 'concerted action' (in the year *before* the SPD entered the Grand Coalition). And although France had the most elaborate indicative planning system in the world, the unions were effectively excluded from this state-business network, under conditions where unions were

²⁰ A remarkable comparative analysis of postwar bourgeois democracies in these terms is Nixon Apple, 'The Rise and Fall of Full Employment Capitalism', *Studies in Political Economy*, 4, Fall 1980. Cf. Bill Warren, 'The State and Capitalist Planning', *MLA* 72, March/April 1972.

extremely weak at the level of collective bargaining and where rural unemployment and short-term work prevailed through the 1950s. Again, it was only in the early 1960s, with the establishment of the basis for CGT-CFDT common action under conditions of a tight labour market and renewed industrial militancy, that overtures were made to incorporate the unions in economic planning. As usual, it was the question of incomes policy that dominated state thinking in this regard. In each of these countries, capitalist economic strategy was predicated on the labour market weakness of the working class until the 1960s and the expansion of the state's role in the economy occurred without the union's participation.²¹

In direct contrast, it was in those societies in which the labour movement had been strong enough to secure an effective commitment by the state to Keynesianism and full-employment policies in the immediate postwar period, and at the same time were industrially well-organized and thus able to take advantage of full employment *via* wage pressure (with its attendant effects in terms of inflation), that trade unions were drawn into the state's economic apparatus. This was the situation in Britain, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Holland—and in each case incomes policy was the central mechanism of incorporation. It was thus trade-union *economic* behaviour (wage pressure) and the particular *mode* of state intervention necessary to deal with it, that was the basis of the establishment of corporatist political structures. There were, however, additional facilitating factors. Two of these were a pre-existing high degree of union centralization and a legal framework for collective bargaining, both of which established suitable conditions for the uniform application of wage restraint while constraining counter-pressures (unofficial strikes) arising in the labour movement. The absence of these conditions in Britain were factors accounting for the relative hiatus in corporatist developments from 1950 to 1960, but attempts at incorporation since that time, as we shall see, have entailed the concurrent attempt to establish these conditions. Another facilitating factor was social democracy. It was not only social-democratic governments which pursued corporatist structures, nor was political loyalty to a social-democratic government the only factor in inducing union cooperation. But the readiness with which unions were willing to look at corporatist integration seriously was conditioned by the effects of social-democratic ideology on the labour movement, with its rejection of the Marxist concept of class struggle, its belief in the neutral state and its promulgation of 'planning'. In contrast, Communist unions, as in Italy and France, rejected involvement in economic

²¹ On the US, see esp. R. B. Duboff, 'Full Employment: The History of a Receding Target', *Politics and Society*, VII, 1, 1977; J. D. Strausman, 'Employment Policy and Job Rationing in Advanced Capitalism', paper delivered at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 1976; on Italy, see esp. V. Foa, 'Incomes Policy: A Crucial Problem for the Unions', *International Socialist Journal*, Jan. 1964; on Germany, see A. Shonfield, *Modern Capitalism*, Oxford, Ch. XII, and W. Müller-Jentsch and Jans-Joachim Sperling, 'Economic Development, Labour Conflicts and the Industrial Relations System in West Germany', in C. Crouch and A. Pizzorno (eds.), *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe Since 1968*, Vol. 1, London 1978; and on France, see esp. J. E. S. Hayward, 'Interest Groups and Incomes Policy in France', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 4, July 1966.

planning bodies and incomes policies explicitly on the grounds that they were corporatist.²²

The Implications for Unions

What are the effects of corporatist political structures on trade unions? The primary *organizational* effect is to articulate the collective mass organization with centralized state apparatus, by encouraging the *centralization* of the union movement so that union policy is increasingly made not at the level of locals or individual unions but *via* the permanent apparatus of confederal centrals. The evolution of centralized wage bargaining has thus been facilitated and encouraged by the state. Ironically, the readiness with which union movements have undertaken this development 'voluntarily' in the modern era has to a large extent been a function of the threat made by the state to intervene directly by regulative/coercive means in the collective bargaining process.

In Sweden, for instance, this took the form of joint centralized wage regulation by the LO and the central employers federation (SAF) in the late 1930s under the direct *threat* of legislation by the newly-elected social democrats. The state acted as only a silent partner in this bargaining structure throughout the postwar period, but the continued threat of direct government intervention served both to establish explicit corporatist state structures and to ensure moderate wage agreements. Thus the unions' promotion of, and integration into, the system of tripartite labour market boards took place, according to the LO's Rudolf Meidner, in part because of 'worry . . . about the effects of a permanent over-full employment economy on the ability of the union organizations to act as free negotiating parties independent of the government'. Similarly, moderate wage increases were negotiated under the central agreements between the LO and SAF in the 1950s and 1960s in part because they 'assigned the highest priority to preventing government intervention in collective bargaining in general and wage determination in particular.'²³ Thus, while centralized bargaining and a corporatist Labour Market Board were encouraged by the LO to avoid 'state control over the pricing of labour services' and as a 'reaction against the strong pressure to have a policy of wage restraint',²⁴ wage moderation *via* these structures was secured due to the fear of further state intervention.

To take another case, the participation of the TUC in Britain in the establishment of national wage-norms in the mid-1960s, and the

²² At the same time, however, these unions have been (until recently in Italy, at least) notoriously weak in terms of collective bargaining potential, and their militancy—even at the level of bread and butter demands—has often been more political in form (one-day general strikes directed at the state) than industrial. Hence, the degree of wage pressure they put on capital—which is the critical factor leading to corporatist political structures—has, apart from all else, been weak in any case.

²³ Both quotations are from J. Fulcher, 'Class Conflict: Joint Regulation and its Decline', in R. Scafe (ed.), *Readings in the Swedish Class Structure*, Oxford 1976, p. 55.

²⁴ Berndt Ohman, *LO and Labour Market Policy Since the Second World War*, LO Research Report, Prisma, 1974, pp. 25–6; cf. Appendices I and III for the phenomenal growth of the Labour Market Board.

development of an internal ruc Incomes Policy Committee to vet the wage claims of individual unions in light of these norms, was acquiesced in by the powerful individual member unions on the grounds that in this way statutory wage control would be avoided. When a statutory incomes policy under the administrative aegis of the tripartite National Board for Prices and Incomes was nevertheless introduced, the union argument for cooperation with it was based on the hope that by demonstrating compliance, the statutory policy would be temporary. Similarly, when the Labour government's proposed legislation in 1969 to control unofficial strikes (*In Place of Strife*) was met with implacable hostility in the labour movement, the Government responded with the explicit argument that 'If the General Council (of the ruc) would agree to legislate, the Government would agree not to legislate.' The attempt by the government to force a change to this effect in the ruc rules, and the resistance of the ruc to this, turned into a fundamental argument on the question of whether the ruc and its affiliated unions could become bodies which would exercise discipline over their members with the degree of reliability that the state could expect from one of its own agencies. The government went so far as to propose to back up ruc rulings by state sanctions against strikers who refused to accept these rulings. The ruc successfully resisted these pressures, and this constituted a substantial victory against fuller incorporation in the state. Nevertheless, the public agreement struck between the government and the ruc to close the controversy, committed the union movement, at least formally, to a ruc role in monitoring and vetting unofficial strikes 'in the national interest'.²⁵

In terms of the effect on trade-union *policy* of corporatist political structures, the most general is the introduction of capitalist growth criteria within the formulation of union wage policy, the central aspect being the recognition that profit is the condition for future economic growth, including that of wages. Of course, to cast the matter simply in terms of profit is too narrow. Macro-considerations for the economy as a whole enter into the formulation of wages policy *via* union participation in corporatist structures. Thus the maintenance of full employment, the avoidance of inflation, even the rationalization and concentration of industry, become explicit concerns of unions in formulating wage demands. As Meidner has put it, the full acceptance the 1940s of the idea of the co-ordination of wage bargaining among the unions in Sweden, an idea originally developed to increase the solidarity of the working class, was 'forced upon the unions by outside forces and circumstances' and 'admittedly on different grounds from those originally advocated. . . . Full employment and the preservation of economic stability were now regarded as a stronger argument for co-ordination than a wage solidarity policy.'²⁶

²⁵ I discuss these events extensively in my *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy, The Labour Party, The Trade Unions and Incomes Policy 1945-1974*, Cambridge 1976, esp. Ch. 7.

²⁶ R. Meidner, *Co-ordination and Solidarity: An Approach to Wages Policy*, LO Research Report, Stockholm 1974, pp. 16-18.

This is not to say that all concerns related to an *autonomous* working-class wages policy are lost in the process. Indeed, in so far as the redistributive aspects of collective bargaining *between the classes* taken as a whole are largely foregone in the context of a corporatist wage restraint policy, there is an added impetus for a 'socially conscious' and centralized labour movement to evolve policies that redistribute the total wage 'pool' going to the working class to the benefit of the lower-paid. This is what might pejoratively be called 'socialism in one class'. In Sweden, this became the lynchpin of trade-union incorporation as the LO explicitly evolved a policy of pursuing higher wages for the low paid in the context of an overall wage policy of 'responsibility', and articulated this with the state *via* the Labour Market Board to obviate the effects of redundancy in the low-profit sectors affected. In this way, the Swedish labour movement attempted to cope with the official hypocrisy of 'justice to the low-paid' that so regularly attends incomes policies, but in the process it also enmeshed itself further in corporatist state structures.

III. The Contradictions of Corporatism

The development of corporatism in the bourgeois-democratic state, however, is by no means linear. It is subject to repeated strains and even ruptures, which emerge from the contradiction contained in the attempt, not to smash, but to incorporate those very working-class organizations which, however reformist, are the vehicle through which class struggle is waged, day-by-day and year-by-year. The very legitimation that corporatist structures are designed to give to state policy is contradicted by the 'delegitimation' that these structures produce over time. This is not primarily due to a popular-democratic resentment against the incorporation of labour and business associations to the exclusion of other 'non-functional' interest groups. Nor is it in the main a product of a developing political rejection on the part of workers of the principle of union collaboration with the bourgeois state. It is rather that the concrete form in which trade unions legitimate/mediate state economic policy is *via* their promulgation of wage restraint 'in the nation interest' and their administration of it to their members. Because it is not just the trade union (conceived as some abstract form of organization), or the union bureaucracy, which 'quantifies' workers demands under capitalism, but the workers themselves who do so, the application of wage restraint undermines what Adam Przeworski calls the 'material basis of consent.'²⁷ This need not happen on a large scale immediately, of course, although incomes policy is continuously breached surreptitiously by sectoral or local negotiations outside the control of centralized bargaining, which are the basis of 'wage drift'. This is only a partial breach, however, and in so far as wage restraint is practised continually or intensified to the point of producing falling real wages, there is an increasing likelihood that, through the mobilization of opposition within union organizations at the policy or union elections level, or through the expression of unofficial strikes on a

²⁷ Adam Przeworski, 'Material Bases of Consent: Economics and Politics in a Hegemonic System', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 1, 1979.

large scale, trade unions will withdraw from, or at least attempt to renegotiate their place in corporatist political structures.

Thus, what characterizes the development of corporatist structures, no less than their persistence, in certain bourgeois democracies, is their instability. The corporatist-structured incomes policies of Britain and Sweden in the late 1940s were defeated by the labour movement at the turn of the decade, and although resuscitated quickly in Sweden, in Britain they were not really revived until the Conservative government established the tripartite National Economic Development Council in 1961 to secure trade-union participation in an incomes policy. (In Holland, the initial postwar policies of corporatist economic planning structures lasted longer, but rank-and-file pressure led to a renegotiation of the basis of incomes policy in 1959 and the rejection of centralized wage controls by 1963.) But it was the outbreak of rank-and-file militancy throughout Europe in the late 1960s that really demonstrated the fragility of corporatist political structures. This militancy, being a general phenomenon after the recession of 1966-7, cannot, of course, be attributed only to the resentment against corporatist wage-restraint policies. But where they existed, resentment against them certainly fueled militancy and became a focal point for mobilization.

The effect on the union leadership was readily visible, as they ran after their members, not merely in a cynical attempt to retain organizational control, but often as a genuine response to their base. The consequences for corporatist structures were, at a minimum, a substantial decline in the authority of the centralized wage bargain (Sweden) and at a maximum, the actual, albeit temporary, withdrawal of the union leadership from certain corporatist structures (Britain and Holland). Even in West Germany, where 'concerted action' had but recently got off the ground, the effect of the 1969 strike wave was notable: 'The sudden revision of the unions' restrained wage policy due to the dissatisfaction on the part of their members was a decisive turning point for the state incomes policy. Since this revision, "concerted action" and the guidelines have had only limited influence on actual wage policy.'²⁸

The Failure of Coercion

The immediate response of the state to these developments was in most cases a coercive one, designed to weaken the union movement in general or a particular sector of it. This was seen in Britain in terms of industrial relations legislation directly concerned with constraining the right to strike, both by making unofficial strikes in most critical circumstances illegal, and by legally requiring unions to police them. In Holland, the state undertook to invalidate wage agreements which it considered detrimental to the national interest. In Sweden, the coercive response was also there, but it was more balanced: the right to strike for public employees was suspended and the 1971 wage agreement was struck only after the threat to impose an agreement (favouring

²⁸ Muller-Jentsch and Sperling, pp. 286-7.

the LO's position) upon the employers. In West Germany, the threat of a statutory incomes policy reared its head.

Coercive measures had little impact, however, in resuscitating corporatist integration. This was both because rank-and-file militancy did not dissipate in the face of these measures and because union leaders feared for their own autonomy as a consequence of legislation and, having been once burnt, became more responsive to rank-and-file demands. Thus, in the early 1970's official strikes became more common, and a significant radicalization was seen in both the industrial and political programmes of the union movements. This development also reflected the unions' response to the new economic situation of the 1970s, above all the concurrent and dramatic rise of unemployment and inflation. For in so far as wage restraint could no longer be legitimated on the grounds of full employment and price stability, the rationale upon which postwar corporatist structures had rested was effectively removed. Corporatism now had to be legitimated on the grounds that wage restraint would *restore* full employment and price stability, or, even more difficult, on the grounds that it would prevent the situation from getting worse. While trade-union leaders were certainly open to such arguments, it was hardly surprising that they treated them with caution, not least because not only their own, but clearly the bourgeoisie's faith in the 'mixed economy' was somewhat shaken. In this situation, union leaders were bound to 'up the ante' for reintegration. This was seen in the 'socio-political' turn of the DGB, in the 'Meidner plan' in Sweden and in the 'Social Contract' in Britain.

Indeed, the question posed by high unemployment for corporatist structures in the 1970s was why they should, apart from inertia, continue to exist at all. Their development, after all, was predicated on the need to cope with wage pressure resulting from near-full employment. And the unemployment of the 1970s was both an economic reflection of, and a state response to, the earlier inability of the state, *pace* Poulantzas, to assimilate effectively even 'reformist' trade unions into 'the institutional materiality of the (state) administrative structure.'²⁹ But the role for corporatist structures would only have been obviated in so far as unemployment had the effect of undermining working-class militancy. Although it is difficult to predict what its long-term effect will be, and to deny there may be some threshold of unemployment yet to be reached which would cow the working class into submission, it is certainly the case that this did not happen, except for very temporary periods, in the 1970s. The long-term structural strengthening of the working class identified by Arrighi itself makes unemployment a less potent phenomenon in the 1970s than in the 1930s or even in the late 1940s and 1950s. Moreover, whereas the mass unemployment in the 1930s followed the *defeat* of working-class militancy in the 1920s, the present unemployment follows the *successes* of the wage and strike explosion of the late 1960s and early 1970s which increased courage and organizational capacity for further struggles. Finally, the very coexistence of rapid inflation with unemployment (due in good part to successful wage pressure, if much else

²⁹ Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, p. 225.

as well) increasingly impels workers toward further militancy to defend real wages.

Corporatism in a New Guise

Under these conditions, corporatism still had a role to play in bourgeois democracies. But the resuscitation of corporatist structures took a new turn in light of the effective decentralization and radicalization of the union movements. Rather than persist with coercive measures to strengthen corporatist structures and run the risk of endangering bourgeois democracy altogether, the state, especially where social-democratic governments were in office, set about, partly in response to the new demands coming from the unions themselves, to integrate lower levels of the movement—right down to the shop floor—more effectively. This took the form of progressive legislation and state-fostered managerial practices designed to facilitate union recognition in unorganized sectors and extend union membership in organized sectors; to foster workers participation schemes in company boards and works councils (this time under the direct aegis of the unions); to institutionalize local-level bargaining and shop-steward committees; and to provide a legal framework for qualitative issues (e.g., health and safety), unfair dismissals and redundancy. In one way or another this was the direction of social-democratic state industrial relations practices in Sweden, West Germany and Britain in the early and mid-1970s.³⁰ These reforms were progressive, but they further enmeshed the trade unions in the legal apparatus of the state and institutionalized and juridified conflict on the shop floor. Moreover, combined with the eschewing by social-democratic governments of *statutory* incomes policies, and the programmatic bow made by social-democratic parties to some form of 'investment planning', these reforms constituted the new 'quid pro quo' for wage restraint under resuscitated corporatist political structures.

It was on the basis of these developments that certain Marxist theorists began to envisage the possibility of corporatism being the field on which class struggle would be brought 'into the heart of the state apparatus'. The naiveté of such prognoses is made clear by observing the effects of corporatist arrangements precisely in those countries where conditions were most favourable for waging such struggles—i.e., where social-democratic governments were in office. In Sweden the 1973–74 central wage negotiations 'reversed the trend from 1964 through 1966 and 1969, to 1971 of increasing difficulty and conflict. The 1973–4 negotiations were the fastest since the early sixties and the only ones since then not requiring mediation'.³¹ This outcome was enhanced by the government using its taxation policy to shift the burden of pension contributions from worker to employer, on the condition that wage demands during the negotiations would be correspondingly reduced. But this did not alter the over-all impact of

³⁰ See W. Streek, 'Organizational Consequences of Corporatist Co-operation in West German Labor Unions: A Case Study', Berlin 1978; Fulcher, 'Class Conflict'; and R. Hyman, 'British Trade Unionism in the 1970's', *Studies in Political Economy*, 1, 1979.

³¹ Fulcher, p. 83.

wage moderation in these negotiations, and in so far as it led to the reduction of conflict in centralized negotiations, it acted as a break in sustaining in a unified way the previous mobilization. Similarly in West Germany, after two years of unofficial and official strikes which had secured a growth in real wages outside the guidelines established in the incomes policy, 'union wage policy once again acquiesced to the recommendations of the Federal Government and its Council of Experts. Contractual wage increases were kept within the guidelines of incomes policy, which provided only for an adjustment of wages to price increases and also planned a redistribution favourable to corporate earnings.'³² And in Britain, the resuscitation of corporatism *via* the Labour Government—TUC 'social contract' wage-norm negotiations in 1975–76, introduced the most sustained and draconian reduction of real wages (by 8% from 1974–75 to 1976–77) in the post-war period. Strikes correspondingly fell to their lowest levels, after the intense mobilization of industrial struggle over the previous six years, for well over a decade. As in Sweden, this demobilization occurred in the context of a wage norm designed to benefit the low-paid and the tying of the reduced wage demands to decreases in taxation. But in the context of rising unemployment and falling wages in general in Britain, this at best had the effect of redistributing very marginally the burden of increased exploitation.³³

Each of these corporatist wage policies were negotiated in years of national economic crisis of proportions unknown in the postwar period. And corporatist political structures became the vehicle for engineering, legitimating ('in the national interest') and administering the increase in exploitation which was necessary to sustain capital in the crisis. The sacrifice undertaken by the working class in the context of the crisis would have been one thing had the respective governments implemented those reflationary policies and structural reforms which the union movements had promulgated earlier in the 1970s. That they were undertaken rather in the context of policies which were designed to restore the profitability of private capital and which depended on *this* to reduce unemployment, is an indication that only class collaboration, not class struggle, can be practised in the corporatist 'heart' of the state apparatus. In so far as class struggle was practiced, it was not within, but outside of an implicitly or explicitly against, corporatist structures, as seen most clearly in the strikes of 1978–9 in West Germany and Britain, and of 1980 in Sweden.

That certain Marxists have nevertheless identified the possibility of class struggle occurring in the corporatist 'heart' of the state apparatus has much to do with the fact that the corporatism of the 1970's involved the unions in tripartite discussions on 'investment planning'. This occurred extensively in Britain where the Labour Government, as an alternative to undertaking the direct impositions on capital which had

³² Muller-Jentich and Sperling, p. 292.

³³ See L. Panitch, 'Socialists and the Labour Party: A Reappraisal', in R. Milliband and J. Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register 1979*, London 1979; and R. Tarling and F. Wilkinson, 'The Social Contract: post-war incomes policies and their inflationary impact', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1, No. 4, Dec. 1977.

been the core of Labour's 1974 election manifesto, established an 'industrial strategy' based on tripartite sectoral working parties to 'plan' investment industry by industry. The emptiness of this planning exercise—apart from its legitimation value—can be seen from the comments of Jack Jones, the main union architect of the Social Contract. Speaking in 1977 to a TUC conference, he said: 'I have yet to see . . . any firm evidence that the efforts of the sector working parties . . . have produced any significant increase in investment or in employment, and that is the test. . . . In my view, an industrial strategy which relies only on the deliberations of sector working parties, on polite talks with industrialists and trade associations . . . is not a strategy at all, but an excuse for one.'³⁴ As Lehmbruch put the matter, regarding corporatist arrangements in West Germany and Austria: 'Enlarging the field of corporatist economic decision-making beyond incomes policies (or, more exactly, control of wage policies) would have meant, among others, control of profits and of investment and hence, a considerable structural transformation. This would have necessitated a shift in power relations which certainly could not be obtained within a corporatist system.'³⁵

It will be argued that the extension of conclusions based on the British and West German experience to other countries is invalid. Particularly, some will say that Sweden, where the LO, the Social Democratic Party and the Labour Market Board are reputedly animals of quite another breed, shows the way to the 'socialist corporatist state'. To be sure, that the outcome of corporatist structures would have been exactly the same in Sweden as in West Germany and Britain in the late 1970s cannot be entirely clear. The defeat of the Social Democrats in 1976 foreshortened the relevant period in which the new testing of the limits of social-democratic reform could be undertaken (although the new government maintained the corporatist structures in place). But James Fulcher's reading of the situation on the eve of the 1976 electoral defeat appears apt: ' . . . the government's decision to allow the investment of state pension funds in private industry has made possible the covert extension of state ownership. State intervention may well, however, create more problems for the organizations of the working class than it solves. It seems unlikely that, in a climate of intense international competition, any government, whatever its character, will carry out measures which might seriously threaten the profitability and competitiveness of industry. Indeed, state-owned industries in Sweden, as elsewhere in capitalist societies, tend to be operated according to

³⁴ Another union delegate, now a left-Labour MP, came to this conclusion on the basis of his experience with investment planning: 'It is not enough for us to meet and to have generalized discussions in Sectoral Working Parties . . . to be given a mass of paper work, much of which it is difficult enough to find the time to read, and the information never really getting down . . . on to the shop floor. . . . Competition between employers and industries causes them, by their very nature, to be secretive and un-cooperative. . . .' TUC, *The Trade Union Role in Industrial Policy, Report of a Conference of Affiliated Unions*, Congress House, London, 1977, pp. 33, 43. See also the evidence contained in *State Intervention in Industry: a workers' enquiry* (Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle, N. Tyneside Trades Councils) Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1980.

³⁵ G. Lehmbruch, 'Liberal Corporatism and Party Government', *Comparative Political Studies*, 1, April 1977, p. 109.

capitalist principles. Thus the Social Democrat government's political need to meet the demands of LO may be expected to conflict with its need to maintain economic competitiveness and the 'labour' government in Sweden may not be able to avoid the dilemma that has so afflicted labour governments in Britain.³⁶

IV. Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from this discussion? Despite their instability (marked by the withdrawal from time to time of active union cooperation in these structures), it remains clear that, once established, corporatist structures exhibit a tenacious durability, spanning the rise and fall of particular governments. (In Britain, for instance, the NEDC has withstood not only Heath's 'Selsdon Man', but also the more extreme ideological and policy shifts of the Thatcher regime; while in Sweden, the new governing coalition retained the corporatist structures inherited from the long period of Social Democratic rule, in particular the Labour Market Board.) Nevertheless, it does seem to be the case that it is incorrect to see the institutionalized network of state-business-labour collaboration as *displacing* party/parliamentary activity or, as Poulantzas seemed to think, as obviating the need for striking 'political compromises on the political arena—that is, of publicly elaborating the hegemonic interest in the form of a national interest'.³⁷ The salience and the viability of trade-union integration in corporatist structures in any given conjuncture depends in large part on its articulation with complementary party/parliamentary activity, and on the public legitimization which trade unions accord to the 'national interest'. The resuscitated corporatism of the 1970s was very much dependent on the bargains struck between social-democratic parties and trade unions; involving the promise that the compromises made by the working class in corporatist structures would be compensated for *via* the parliamentary process, whether through the 'social wage', industrial relations legislation or direct impositions on capital. In so far as corporatist structures are now a major locus for legitimating and administering working-class sacrifices 'in the national interest', and in so far as compensation for these sacrifices cannot be secured by unions directly from capital within corporatist structures themselves, they need to be provided in the party/parliamentary arena (where the costs of these compensations, in any case, can be made diffuse, i.e., born by the 'public' in general). Social-democratic parties play a critical role in articulating the two arenas: they offer to win compensations for the working class in parliamentary institutions which dissociate state and class in representation/mediation, in exchange for compromises made by the working class in corporatist institutions where representation/mediation is explicitly class-based. The strength of the link provided by social-democratic parties is often the test of the degree to which the organized network of state-business collaboration extends to the effective incorporation of unions.

It should be noted again, however, that this link does not prevent the recurrent instability of corporatist practices. If trade unions are readier to cooperate within corporatist structures when social-democratic

³⁶ Fulcher, p. 86.

³⁷ Poulantzas, p. 223.

parties are in office, they still are unable to escape indefinitely the central contradiction of remaining responsive to their base while administering corporatist wage restraint. To be sure, this contradiction is aggravated because the actual compensation offered the working class in the parliamentary arena for the sacrifices obtained in corporatist structures usually falls considerably short of the promises made by social-democratic parties, particularly given the restrictions which the current crisis imposes on the capitalist state's social expenditures and its willingness to challenge the nostrums of 'business confidence'. But whereas the party/parliamentary arena is protected from instability by its universalistic, non-class constitution in general, and by regular elections in particular, the trade unions' very function of representing the immediate material interests of their members creates a much more difficult role for them in promulgating and administering the 'national interest' within corporatist structures. Hence trade-union incorporation in the state is marked by far more discontinuities in the corporatist policy process than is the case with social-democratic parties in the parliamentary process. These discontinuities influence, but do not exactly parallel, the electoral fortunes and intra-party controversies of social-democratic parties. It should be noted, moreover, that attempts by the state to overcome the instability of corporatism by weakening the responsiveness of unions to their memberships, are themselves likely to emanate (as was the case in the late 1960s and early 1970s) from parliamentary legislation which seeks to reorganize the industrial relations system. Thus here as well, corporatism should be seen not as *displacing* parliament, but rather as depending on it for the conditions necessary for its success.

As for the question of corporatism bringing class struggle into the administrative heart of the state apparatus, such conceptions would indeed appear to be particularly barren. They involve an insufficient appreciation of the role corporatist structures necessarily play, as arenas of top-level bargaining, in forestalling or constraining working-class mobilization. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the following example. At the height of the wave of strikes in Britain in 1979, the TUC and the Labour Government issued a joint statement on 'The Economy, the Government and Trade Union Responsibilities'. Its theme was this: 'There is no answer in confrontation. Solutions to our problems have to be found in agreement. But agreement will only be possible if our people all recognize that we are all part of a community of interest.' And it went on: 'The Government, business, and financial institutions, and the trade-union movement, by their actions help to decide how the economy performs. This has fundamental implications for the proper handling of the relationship between these great interests. . . . It also imposes on the TUC, with its broad and undisputed representative capacity, the need to accept that its expanding role carries with it wider responsibilities.' On this basis the General Council of the TUC issued, as an annex to this public document, restrictive guidelines to its affiliated unions on negotiating and disputes procedures, on the conduct of strikes and picketing, on the maintenance of emergency services in strikes and on the 'flexible operation' of the closed shop.³⁸

³⁸ *The Economy, The Government and Trade Union Responsibilities, Joint Statement by the TUC and the Government*, London, HMSO, February 1979.

The importance of this document was not that it laid the basis for the ruc's own restrictive administration of strike activity. This is presently far beyond its capacity. It was rather that on the basis of the document, the ruc General Council *publicly* legitimated, and associated the working class with legitimating, the general interest of the bourgeoisie and the government regarding the strikes then taking place. *This is the corporatist field of class collaboration*, and in such situations corporatist structures operate more effectively as a hegemonic apparatus than do parliaments, precisely because representation/mediation under corporatism is class-specific rather than universalistic. At the same time, some of the very members of the General Council of the ruc who were associated with this document were leading their individual union's *official* strikes against which the document was directed. *This is the field of industrial class struggle*. That the two hats may sometimes be worn at once bespeaks precisely the contradictions between trade unionism and corporatism in bourgeois democracies. But this is not a basis for confusing a field of class collaboration with a field of class struggle.

The Fate of Trade Unionism

Corporatism must be seen as a system of state-structured class collaboration. As such, its extension poses not an opportunity, but a danger to working-class organizations. Based on communitarian premises and collaborative practices which articulate the interests of capital with the state, corporatist structures require of trade unions, as their contribution to the operation, *not that they cut their ties with their base, but rather that they use those ties to legitimate state policy and elaborate their control over their members*. This would alleviate their function of working-class mobilization, albeit on 'economistic' premises, against capital and the state. The reason we are able to speak of the development of corporatism *within* bourgeois democracy is that corporatist structures have not yet entailed the abrogation of freedom of association which is the first task of the 'authoritarian state'. The network of corporatist institutions has not yet subsumed trade unions, as Middlemas aptly puts it, 'into a pyramid of authority, within fixed limits of activity, exercising power only in so far as it has been delegated by the state'.³⁹ They still remain, as 'collective mass organizations' distinctive to the working class, in a fundamentally different relation to the state than the conventional state apparatus, participating in the 'institutional materiality of the administrative structure', yet not reducable to it. To be sure, the consistent clamour that their participation in state policy making needs be balanced by an extension of their disciplinary control over their members bespeaks the dangerous dynamic of corporatism. And this remains the warning light to the need to maintain clarity over the importance of struggles within unions and between unions and the state over limiting the scope of the state as pertains to trade-union organization and practice. The danger in Marxist theorizations of corporatism is that they may fall prey to the romantic notion that the central contradiction of corporatism can be swept away in formulations that rhetorically combine invocations to retain the maximum

³⁹ Middlemas, p. 460.

responsiveness to membership with programmes for further assimilating unions into corporatist political structures. It is perhaps worth noting that no less an authority on the matter than the LO's Rudolf Meidner has admitted that the elaborated reform strategy of the Swedish unions in the 1970s, precisely in proposing to widen the scope of corporatist arrangements, was at the same time implicitly 'threatening in its most far-reaching manifestations to undermine the whole basis of the trade-union movement's independence from the state'.⁴⁰

To warn against the dangers of further trade-union integration into the capitalist state is not to return to a syndicalist position. Far from it. It is rather to take the position that one of the reasons that a socialist transformation is impossible *via* participation in corporatist structures, apart from the function of these structures in the bourgeois state, is that trade unions by their very nature cannot undertake such a transformation on their own, being constituted, as they are, on the basis of mobilizing workers for short-term gains *within* capitalism. This does not negate their role as agencies in class struggle, but it does account for the relative low ordering in their operative priorities usually given to public ownership and controls over capital, let alone to the project of bringing the working class to power in the sense that the bourgeoisie is in power in capitalist society. For this a revolutionary working-class party is a vital necessity. But for this project to be a meaningful one—even if it is directed at a democratic transition *via* the parliamentary structures of the bourgeois state—it requires above all that the mobilizing institutions of working-class struggle—both the extra-parliamentary party organization and the trade unions—retain their autonomy from the bourgeois state, and constitute as such the main basis for building working-class hegemony. Corporatist political structures are incompatible with this basic requirement. The Euro-Communist project, taken seriously, is a hazardous enough project in itself, given this requirement (as was seen in Italy in 1976–79).⁴¹ The social-democratic variant of it (Euro-Corporatism?) is another thing altogether, although it should serve as a warning light in the construction of revolutionary strategies for a democratic transition.

⁴⁰ Meidner, p. 28.

⁴¹ Limitations of space have made it impossible here to discuss recent developments in countries which had not by the 1970s developed corporatist structures. Particularly, some authors have asked whether developments in Italy in the 1970's (and not least the participation of the PCI in the 'parliamentary majority' which sustained the Andreotti government between 1976 and 1979) involved laying the foundation for the integration of Italian trade unions in corporatist arrangements. See esp. P. Lange, 'Unions, Parties, The State and Liberal Corporatism', *Il Mulino*, XXVIII, November–December 1979; and 'Neo-Corporatism in Italy? A Case in European Perspective,' paper prepared for the Workshop on Neo-Corporatism and Public Policy, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, April 1980. These should be set in the general discussion offered in P. Lange and S. Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition: Conflict and Continuities*, London 1979; S. Tarrow, 'Historic Compromise as Popular Front: Italian Communism in the Majority 1976–1979', in H. Machin (eds.), *The End of Eurocommunism?*, London 1981; and I. Regalia et al., 'Labour Conflicts and Industrial Relations in Italy', in Crouch and Pizzorno.

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Philip Corrigan
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Bolshevism and the USSR

The nature and deficiencies of Soviet society have been hotly debated by Marxists more or less continuously since 1917.* Marxist polemics over Bolshevism go back even further. It is therefore wise to begin by indicating where we think we have anything new to say. It is not at the level of facts. Our concern is rather with the theories which give such well rehearsed facts as Russia's pre-1917 'backwardness' or the decimation of the urban working class in the civil war their salience in Marxist accounts. Our specific focus is on what we call the Bolshevik problematic. We use the term 'problematic' to describe the usually unarticulated premises shared by a variety of otherwise opposed positions, which allow us to speak of them as identifiably 'Marxist', 'Bolshevik', or whatever, notwithstanding their differences. In talking of a specifically Bolshevik problematic we therefore intend both to point to the common ground on which we believe *all* major Bolshevik positions stand and to distinguish this common ground from that of Marxism as such. Two further clarifications are necessary given the overly formal way in which this

concept is often used. First, we do not see the Bolshevik problematic as being simply a theoretical framework. The premises of which we speak are *material* practices, forms and agencies as much as ideas. These include for instance a particular kind of party before 1917—illegal, urban, its leaders mostly in exile, and particular kinds of state formation after. Such social forms are as much a part of the equipment Bolsheviks brought to bear on the problems that confronted them as their understanding and application of Marx or their analyses of Tsarism or imperialism.

Second, we do not see this problematic as being static and unchanging, and still less as tidy and consistent. It is the historical product of a century of struggle, and there are struggles and tensions, and silences and absences within it. Indeed, we will argue that Bolshevism is structured around a raging contradiction which lies at its very heart. We cannot do justice to Bolshevism's complexity in an article of this length. But we must avoid reifying. The Bolshevik problematic is not some mysterious hidden structure that somehow realises itself in the Bolsheviks' actions, but an analytic device we employ to impose coherence upon them. Unless both of these points are borne in mind throughout, our argument is open to a seriously idealist misreading.

Our interest in the Bolshevik problematic in this article is twofold. We are primarily concerned with its influence within the USSR. But we also contend that the Bolshevik problematic has dominated most (though not all) Marxist analyses of the Soviet experience, including critical ones. This has had several unfortunate effects. Critical Marxist analyses have all too often tended to replicate Bolsheviks' own assessments of the contexts in which they were acting, the problems they faced and the range of available remedies. Disputes within Bolshevism have attracted far more notice than the assumptions which competing positions shared. Most seriously of all, Bolshevism itself has rarely been taken as an explicit object of study within the mainstream of critical Marxist accounts of the USSR. In sum, the common ground we have called the Bolshevik problematic has remained something of a Marxist blindspot.

The USSR: Three Familiar Views

Critical Marxist analyses of the Soviet Union can be divided into three broad groups. (1) *Classical Trotskyist views*, of which Mandel is probably the best contemporary example, hold the USSR to be a deformed or degenerated workers' state. They argue that the production relations of Soviet society remain 'basically' socialist, but a parasitic bureaucracy rather than the working class exercises political power and enjoys economic privilege. This ruling 'caste' does not constitute a ruling

* This is based upon a paper given by Corrigan and Sayer to the URPR/New School Conference on 'The USSR in the World Today,' New York, March 1979. Sources for our argument can be found in our following supporting texts: Corrigan and Sayer, *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory*, London and New York 1980, and *For Mao*, London and New York 1980; Corrigan, Ramsay and Sayer, 'The State as a Relation of Production,' in P. Corrigan (ed.), *Capitalism, State Formation and Marxist Theory*, London 1980; Sayer, *Marx's Method*, London and New York 1979.

class. (2) *State capitalist theories* consider the USSR a capitalist society, albeit of a peculiar type. Control of the state, which itself controls the economy, is seen as the basis for exploitation of wage labour and accumulation of capital. Party and state bosses are regarded as forming a specifically capitalist ruling class, a 'state-bourgeoisie' in Bettelheim's term. Variants of this view are held by the Socialist Workers Party (swp) in Britain, the Communist Party of China (at least until recently), and others including Martin Nicolaus and Charles Bettelheim. They frequently differ over when and how 'state capitalism' came into being. For Tony Cliff (swp) it was in the twenties, for the CPC sometime after 1953. (3) '*New class*' theories agree that there is a Soviet ruling class but deny that this class is a bourgeoisie or the USSR is in any way capitalist. For them the Soviet Union is neither capitalist nor socialist, but a social formation of a new and historically specific type. Some see it as progressive with regard to capitalism. Older new class theories include those of Rizzi and Schachtman, recent ones those of Djilas, Melotti and (in his latest writings on the topic) Sweezy. These theories differ as to exactly what kind of social formation the USSR is and who makes up its ruling class.

Beneath the surface heat and thunder of debates between these positions, two motifs predominate. The first—in fact an extraordinary focus for *Marxist* historical accounts in both its personalism and its stress on motive and intention—is the notion of 'betrayal'. A self-interested clique or stratum, strategically located in the state and party bureaucracy, is held at some point to have 'seized power' and perverted the machinery of state to its own ends. This is the structure both of official communist critiques of Stalin and of Maoist critiques of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Accusations of betrayal also occur in Trotskyist accounts, though these at least attempt to explain how such 'betrayals' became possible. And this is, of course, the issue. For put at its simplest, what kind of a *socialist* revolution is it that can be so readily betrayed by one 'clique' or—in the ludicrous extreme of this view—by one man? If this *has* occurred, then what requires explanation is surely the antecedent centralisation of power that permitted such an outcome. And for that, not a personal and motivational, but a structural and historical explanation is necessary.

The second motif is that of 'backwardness', often coupled with isolation. This has an ancestry going back at least to Kautsky and the Mensheviks. The crudest version of this argument assumes an inexorable path of historic development that all societies must undergo and argues that in the absence of revolution in the 'advanced countries', the Soviet State had no alternative but to act as a surrogate capitalist accumulator while its upper echelons developed into a 'state-bourgeoisie'. This is in essence the swp position. Elsewhere things are stated less nakedly. Trotsky, for instance, did not explicitly endorse the inexorability argument but, nonetheless invoked Russian backwardness and isolation to account for the rise of those strata who supported Stalin. Similarly, decisive importance has sometimes been attached to the civil war decimation of the urban proletariat, although much of the force of this argument derives from the hidden assumption that the 'backward' peasant masses who survived could not build socialism.

'Backwardness' arguments are less easily dismissed than 'betrayal' theses, for communism does require a high level of development of the productive forces. But while economic development, broadly conceived, may well be a necessary condition for communism, it does not follow that all societies have to go through a capitalist or quasi-capitalist stage. This would follow only if capitalism were the unique set of social relations capable of stimulating such development. It is difficult to see how such an argument might be constructed in a historical materialist framework (though bourgeois economists working from their universal 'homo economicus' might have less trouble). We would also suggest that capitalist 'development' has in fact meant underdevelopment for many—in the metropolitan countries as well as in the 'third world'—while socialism has provided ample evidence of the productive viability of alternative and more egalitarian forms of development.

The Peasantry: Mere 'Sacks of Potatoes'?

More specifically, it is (to quote Trotsky) 'the peasant . . . thrust back by capitalism away from the mainstream of development' whose 'political barbarism, social formlessness, primitiveness and lack of character' are held to cause the trouble. For Lenin, the same peasants were a 'sea of enemies'. It is not low levels of technique as such, but the attitudes they are claimed to support that makes peasant backwardness such a threat to socialism. But here again there is room for doubt. This view certainly has provenance from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* and ample backing in Kautsky's *Agrarian Question*; though Marx also drew attention to the socialist potential in social arrangements among Russian peasants. More to the point, the twentieth-century examples of successful peasant revolutions and wars of national liberation should surely by now have dented these cosy assumptions about peasant consciousness. How could the revolutions in China and Vietnam have been made by a class whose collective identity is comparable to that of a 'sack of potatoes'? Experience of agricultural co-operation in China and elsewhere suggests the 'petty-bourgeois individualism' Marxists have traditionally ascribed to peasants everywhere is a trifle exaggerated. The point is not to set up some new, romantic image of an invariably revolutionary peasantry to replace the old stereotype of the 'dull-witted muzhik'. It is that we can no longer accept these astonishingly vulgar equations of economic 'backwardness' with social and political primitivism, any more than we can sensibly sustain the converse correlation of extensive proletarianization with necessary political 'maturity'. What is required are specific, historical, materialist investigations of particular circumstances and classes. In their absence the significance of 'backwardness' is not clear. This is not to say it is unimportant. No materialist could deny that a low level of development of human productive capacities, especially in conditions of post-war devastation, must severely constrain the kinds of socialist construction that can be undertaken. But just what the constraints are and how much they constrain—and, indeed, the extent to which, as with 'surplus' labour in China, they may conceal resources—cannot simply be inferred from a set of dubious generalisations about history or peasants. Such a procedure is as unmaterialist as it is ahistorical. We need instead to

look at the contexts in which Russian backwardness and isolation were significant. Not the least of these must be the problematic through which the Bolsheviks apprehended, acted upon and altered the world in which they found themselves.

Origins of the Bolshevik Problematic

Bolshevism has a complex history, not least because it was formed in an attempt to come to grips with a complex and, at the time, novel type of social formation. As Teodor Shanin has grasped, Tsarist Russia was in many ways the prototype of what we would now call a 'developing society'. It was, in one way, extensively developed: Russian industry was fifth in world output in 1914 and boasted some of the world's largest plants. At the same time agrarian production, which occupied the vast majority of the people, was semi-feudal, and the industrial development was of a very particular (and nowadays very familiar) form: semi-colonial, and mainly confined to social, economic and geographical enclaves. In 1914 47% of Russia's industrial capital was held outside the country, and most of the finance for state-led 'internal' development was raised by foreign loans. The highly concentrated and militant proletariat numbered 4 million at most: the peasantry over 100 million. Dominant, if competing, views saw Russia as disadvantageously located in the world market and in need of urgent 'modernisation'. But, as Stolypin in particular realised, this could not happen naturally. There was wide recognition of a need to transform relations in and between agrarian and industrial production from above. This assumed the possibility of direction and management by means located externally to the point of production—specifically, the Tsarist state. Within this autocratic formation there were various forms of opposition—liberal, populist and social-democratic.

What conceptual tools did the Marxism of the period offer to make sense of this singularity? First, the range of texts and analyses available was extremely limited by comparison with today: much that was central to Marx's work was unknown and available texts were interpreted through the grid of Engels's later writings, notably *Anti-Dühring*. Second, they were understood in a particularly late-19th-century way. The theorists of the Second International, in part in competition with contemporary bourgeois ideologies like Social Darwinism, sought to make Marxism a comprehensive system of thought embracing nature, history and society. They stressed the scientificity of their doctrine, seeing it as expressing necessary and universal social and historical laws, as distinct from the pious hopes and moral injunctions of utopian socialism. Amongst such laws was a two-fold serialization of development. First, there were necessary, consecutive stages through which all societies had to pass, impelled by the forward march of the productive forces. And second, of discrete areas of social relations within each stage, 'the economy' was basic and determining, albeit 'in the last instance', while political and cultural relations were superstructural and determined. As Colletti has argued, this meant that production was itself understood in an extremely impoverished way, as technical processes plus invariant laws of econ-

omics. This two-fold serialization dictated the possibilities of socialism. No social revolution could overcome (even if it could 'anticipate') the technical and economic prerequisites—a particular proportion of the population in towns, a certain percentage of the workforce in factories, and so on—that alone could culturally mature a proletariat competent to build socialism. In this view what were seen as 'pre-capitalist' forms were unambiguously retrogressive.

The Fetish of the Productive Forces

Lenin's earliest analyses were formed squarely within the terms of the dominant—Tsarist and Marxist—analyses of Russia-as-a-developing-country, and against the political strategies of other opposition groups. Two crucial early constitutive debates within Bolshevik thought were those against the populists and Socialist Revolutionaries on the one hand, and various 'modernizing' Social Democrats (the 'Economists', the 'Legal Marxists,' and later the Mensheviks) on the other. The former envisaged a distinctive route to socialism, through specifically agrarian productive forms already foreshadowed in the Russian peasant commune. The latter insisted on the need to expand capitalism first, as a necessary base for socialist revolution, and therefore saw surviving communal agrarian forms as objectively reactionary. This led them to support the 'bourgeois' opposition in a manner analogous to those who sought to identify a 'national bourgeoisie' and back them as inherently progressive in imperialized and colonialized social formations in the 1960s and after. Against the populists, Lenin, like Plekhanov and Kautsky, argued the necessity and progressiveness of some form of capitalist industrialization. But against the orthodox Marxist 'modernisers', he (along, initially, with Plekhanov, Zasulich and other subsequent Mensheviks in the *Iskra* collective) rejected any general support except for tactical alliances for proto-bourgeois and bourgeois political forces. Though, as was suggested at the time, Lenin's overall position might have lacked consistency, his evolving politics were increasingly rooted in an analysis of class forces in Russia which proved both sharp and realistic. The tension is typically Bolshevik.

It was out of the specific and novel circumstances of Tsarism analysed in terms of the available, but ill-adapted Marxism that the Bolshevik acceptance of the necessity of promoting and extending certain capitalist productive forms was first formed. Lenin's support for the Stolypin reforms—which he saw as inducing a progressive peasant differentiation on the American small farmer rather than the Prussian junker model—fits easily within such a perspective. So does his later espousal (backed by the majority of the Bolsheviks, including both Stalin and Trotsky) of the 'necessity' to learn from Taylorism, or to control the economy through fiscal manipulation, or to employ highly paid and privileged specialists. To argue here that such measures were adopted with reluctance and under dire material conditions is partially true, but misses the point. It is still the underlying assumption that capitalist paradigms provide the natural, necessary or, indeed, only remedies which permit the link between the problems and *these* solutions. Other

non-capitalist remedies for equally appalling material hardships appear to have worked elsewhere—for example, the co-operative development strategies pioneered in the barren and besieged Border Regions in China during the 1930s and 1940s. It may be that conditions did not exist for the pursuit of analogous strategies in the USSR, though the point is eminently debateable. That issue is beyond the scope of this article. What *can* be asserted with certainty is that Bolshevik theories generally dismissed such possibilities out of hand; and Bolshevik policies, in so far as they did foster typically capitalist productive forms, actively helped suppress these possibilities, in industry as well as agriculture. Judgements both of long-term policy and short-term expediency were made from *within* a set of overarching images of modernity and its prerequisites.

The Break with 'Orthodox' Marxism

But the foregoing is not the complete story of the making of the Bolshevik problematic. It is indeed in some measure less than half the truth. Before the open split in the international socialist movement over the Great War in 1914, Bolshevism was already progressively breaking with 'orthodox Marxism'. The 1905 revolution was crucial, forcing Russian Marxists to abandon old habits of 'formalist deduction' (as Trotsky put it in 1908) and confront 'the class dynamics of the Russian revolution . . . the one that is going on in Russia at the present time'. The impotence of the 'liberal' bourgeoisie and combativity of the working class were made graphically clear. But more than this, 1905, with its massive peasant risings, taught Lenin that *peasants could be revolutionary*. Part of what this meant was explicitly theorised in what we might call the subordinate strand that runs throughout Lenin's work. Part of it awaited another revolution—that of China—to show its full significance. Centrally it meant acknowledging the practical achievements and theoretical implications of ordinary workers and peasants on the move. These practical breaks were finally crystallized in Lenin's 1917 writings (the *Letters on Tactics*, and above all the *April Theses*) whose unorthodoxy so repelled the 'Old Bolsheviks'. In contrast to learning from experience, the latter sought what Lenin in his 'Letters from Afar' derided as 'cut and dried theory'. In his famous 'Lecture on the 1905 Revolution', Lenin denounced the sterility of theoretical dogmatism while stressing the revolutionary courage and creative capacities of both workers *and* 'illiterate peasants'. These points are repeated unambiguously in the texts of the moment of revolution itself, 'Peasants and Workers', and 'To the People'. It was these practical breaks rather than continuities of strategic theory which helped make the Russian Revolution possible and guaranteed that some of its gains were sustained and revolution aided elsewhere. But the breaks occur on the level of what we might call the possibility of a revolutionary politics. They were *not* for the most part carried through to challenge the dominant Bolshevik notions of social development. These continued to turn upon features and criteria drawn from capitalist experience. Because of that contradiction Bolshevism was marked by a constant struggle to maintain the gains which the breaks make possible against the pains that the continuities guaranteed.

The Contradiction within Bolshevism

The crippling contradiction at the heart of Bolshevism lies between its central defining images of modernity and its socialist politics and culture. The former entail a theory of productive forces and of the economic superiority of capitalist methods; the latter calls for increasingly conscious, collective, and egalitarian self-assertion from below. The contradiction is an antagonistic one: to choose either horn of the dilemma is to undercut the basis of the other. Bolshevism certainly broke the automatic link between level of productive forces and socialist revolution. But it did so only to argue that the revolution 'in advance' could speed the development of the productive forces—a proposition in itself that we do not, incidentally, object to—within a framework that was still thought in terms of the categories of capitalist modernization. At the most general level what is at stake here is the Marxist understanding of production. Bolshevism sees production as necessarily involving at each 'stage' of social development a definite and socially neutral set of techniques which can be understood and controlled through the 'laws of economics'. Relations of production are considered more variable. But the central features of capitalist exploitation are held primarily to relate to ownership of the means of production—or at best, their de facto control—by the capitalist class, rather than extending to the ways in which things are actually made. Ownership, in turn, gives capitalists control of the state, ensuring that laws conform to their interests. Conversely to take and retain control of that state, and through it the means of production, is seen as sufficient to ensure that development can proceed in a socialist direction. For instance, Taylorism or one-man management can be considered 'neutral' techniques, useful for advancing production and thus 'objectively' progressive, because production relations are seen only as comprising relations of ownership. The central distinction between capitalism and socialism becomes one of who controls such techniques, and more broadly, to what social and moral purposes the results are applied. Control, moreover, not in the sense of those who make things controlling their own lives, in and out of the workplace; but control through national agencies such as party and state. The latter—machine, bludgeon, hammer—to use the Bolsheviks' own favourite images, were seen as unproblematically socialist ('ours') and well able to control the regrettable, but necessary production forms.

None of this, we should stress, is to deny that real and important differences in the quality of people's lives have flowed from such a change of control in the case of the USSR and other socialist states. Rather it is to point to the fetters that the Bolshevik understanding of production imposes upon the development of certain liberatory potentials. We would argue that this understanding is so impoverished that it ignores—and as practice, suppresses—the most fundamental of socialism's productive forces: the knowledge of better ways of making things locked up in communities of direct producers. Without unleashing this knowledge, centralised planning makes its advances at the cost of reinforcing a set of relations to production lived by direct producers which range from a sense of distance (the production is not really theirs) to varieties of sabotage (central forms of which are 'holding back

and 'exact obedience'). In more formal Marxist terms the Bolshevik contradiction can be understood as a systematic combination of an economistic and technicist strategy towards production with a voluntaristic approach to politics crystallized in an inflated set of state apparatuses. The cultural arena becomes one of sharp and contrasting struggles; quite different notions of education, for example, flow from the economistic or the political emphases. The economism follows from understanding production as a set of necessary techniques governed by neutral laws. The voluntarism follows from the parallel reduction of politics to matters of state policy rather than seeing it located *in* production collectivities and *about* the ways lives are lived there. It is at its sharpest in the assumption that a socialist state *can* control capitalist relations and forms. Recent accounts, especially those of Charles Bettelheim and Carmen Claudin-Urundo, have also drawn attention to Bolshevik economism. Bolshevik *voluntarism*, on the other hand, has been much less identified, although Bettelheim unconsciously replicates it, in his haste to avoid economism, in his own highly idealist notion of 'politics in command'. In Bettelheim this often amounts simply to counterposing political to economic objectives (which was not in our view Mao's intention in his original slogan). This oversight is unfortunate. For we would argue that Bolshevik economism and voluntarism are two sides of the same coin and need equal stress. They represent poles between which Bolshevik policies have lurches, in a consistent oscillation, ever since 1917, and have the same root. There is no paradox here. Productive forms are not only objectives, but also means and resources for socialist transformation. To subordinate production to the imperatives of capitalist modernization (economism) is literally to rob socialist politics of their material base, while simultaneously idealising them (voluntarism).

We would, therefore, suggest that some variant of this contradiction, in which capitalist forms of development dilute, disrupt or deny socialist advance, is the likely outcome of any social revolution from below in a social formation which is dependent rather than dominant in the world market. Without thoroughgoing and conscious challenge the material relations of that market will also provide the core of the categorial and moral framework through which people think the 'obvious' features of what it is to be human. The legacy of dependency—including, above all, a relationship to the world market mediated by an enclaved and gigantist industrial structure and a swollen and overbearing state—will continue to structure perceptions of the direction and means of possible advance. If so, the issues raised here become of far more than just historical importance.

An Alternative Theory of Soviet Society

The Dangers of Theoretical Simplification

Let us now return to the question of the nature of the USSR. By this stage it should be clear how ritual evocations of backwardness

and/or betrayal reproduce the Bolsheviks' own economism and voluntarism. 'Backwardness' gains its explanatory powers only when the 'modernity' with which it is contrasted is conceived and evaluated in Bolshevik or similar terms. 'Betrayal' is persuasive only within a conception of politics whose attenuation is likewise familiarly Bolshevik. Rather than replicate this combination of economism and voluntarism ourselves, we would suggest that the distinctive features of Soviet socialism can be better understood as the historical product of six decades of specifically Bolshevik political practices upon the 'raw material' of the Russian Empire they inherited in 1917. Of course the nature of this raw material limited what could be made out of it. But so too did the tools, skills, techniques and knowledge of its makers.

We do not believe the Soviet Union can be meaningfully described as capitalist—'state' or otherwise—for reasons Mandel, Hindess and others have developed at length. Following Paul Sweezy, we would identify three distinguishing features of capitalist production: (1) Production units operate independently, with the consequence that goods are produced as commodities and resources allocated through a market. (2) Capital accumulation through valorisation of surplus labour is, in Marx's words, 'the direct aim and determining motive' of production, and (3) The foundation of this exploitation is the wage-relation. In our view (1) and (2) are demonstrably inapplicable to the USSR. There has been some decentralization of economic decision-making to enterprises and there is a black market. But overall, most resources are manifestly allocated through the plan, often uneconomically by the standards of market 'rationality'. Absence of rule by market laws in turn means there is no *compulsion* to accumulate comparable to that in capitalist economies. The rapid accumulation which historically has taken place has rather resulted from *political* decisions about economic necessities and priorities—again of a characteristically Bolshevik kind. Further, (3) is difficult to satisfy except purely formally. Even if we allow that because workers do not exercise political power (an oversimplification), they are effectively separated from the state-owned means of production, the content and implications of this 'separation' are very different than in capitalist states. The real guarantees of employment in the USSR mean that, for instance, wage-levels are not subject to the same determinants of supply and demand. Where they are more than purely rhetorical charges (as in much Maoist anti-Soviet propaganda) state-capitalist theories usually prove to be operating with imprecise or inadequate criteria for demarcating specifically capitalist relationships. Thus the SWP case for seeing Soviet accumulation as capitalist rests on an analogy between military competition between the Soviet Union and the West, and economic competition within capitalist economies. Bettelheim, on the other hand, inflates merely necessary into sufficient conditions for capitalist production, confusing surviving capitalist elements in the USSR with a fully-fledged capitalist system.

What about the thesis that the Soviet Union is not capitalist but is nevertheless governed by a new ruling class? In part this argument is semantic, reflecting dissension among Marxists about what is meant by 'class' in the first place. Thus if (like orthodox Trotskyists) we consider ownership of the means of production to be a necessary

feature of any ruling class, we are bound to conclude that no matter how powerful or non-proletarian the rulers of the USSR may be, they are not a ruling class in the Marxist sense of the word. We do not take that view. Nor do we exclude in advance the possibility of a ruling class arising on the basis of control of formally social property. We distinguish class relations as social relationships which confer control over other people's labour and its products, and regard the question of the basis of such control as an empirical one. But we would add the forceful rider that classes are not just analytical fictions. To paraphrase Edward Thompson, classes also *construct* their identities, out of historical experiences which are always specific. The resources for and constraints on that construction are therefore important in making empirical judgements about classes. The argument that the distribution of labour and its products in Soviet society has long been determined, non-democratically, by a relatively small group of party and state bosses is persuasive—though in our view oversimplified—and this usually forms the basis for serious 'new class' theories. Against it we would put a number of points.

The boundaries of this 'class' are both notoriously difficult to specify (just how lowly a party member or *apparatchik* qualifies?) and unusually open. Moreover, notwithstanding some slowing of mobility in recent years, this relative openness appears to be a structural rather than a conjunctural feature of Soviet society. The mechanisms for consolidating, and in particular for passing on 'class power', are much less reliable than those which flow from the transferability and inheritability of property in capitalist states. Additionally, for a supposedly cohesive ruling class, the upper reaches of the Soviet party and state have proven peculiarly vulnerable to what in these terms would have to be analysed as 'intra-class' strife, carried under Stalin to suicidal extremes. Most importantly of all, there are severe constraints on the Soviet rulers' freedom of action from below. Expectations of material *guarantees* for the broad masses of the people—not just of a 'safety net', but of improving provision of work, food, housing, clothing, medical and cultural facilities *as of right*—are built into the Soviet system in a way they are not in any capitalist society. Recent experience of the Thatcher government's rapid dismantling of much of Britain's 'welfare state' (which was supposedly protected by a social-democratic 'consensus'), indicates how facile it is to compare the Soviet situation with capitalist welfare provision—where it exists. The difference is again structural rather than conjunctural. The *entire* legitimacy of the Soviet ruling stratum derives from its ability to administer a system which meets these expectations. No capitalist ruling class rules under that constraint or faces that accountability. The ideologies of individual 'freedom' and so forth which sanction their activities make no such promises and recognise no such obligations. Indeed in many cases they actively deny social responsibility for individual welfare.

A 'Deformed' Socialism?

The implications of this difference are immense. Because of it workers in the socialist states *do* exercise a form of political power over their rulers which is extensive if usually passive. Indeed in this sense they

arguably wield greater substantial power, notwithstanding the lack of formal democratic mechanisms, than their counterparts in the most politically democratic of capitalist states. And, conversely, the opportunities for governing groups to develop a distinctive class identity and consciousness are correspondingly reduced. When the Polish shipyard workers rioted in 1970 over food price rises—itsself an instructive comparison with the West—not only were the rises rescinded, but Gomulka fell. Compare this to what happened in France two years earlier. More broadly we would agree with Mandel that those who see in the USSR the prototype of a new class system based on a new mode of production, 'bureaucratic collectivist' or whatever, have failed to demonstrate laws of motion, tendencies, contradictions and so on sufficiently specific to the system and distinct from what we would expect of capitalism or socialism to justify their claim. This failure undercuts 'new class' assertions whatever their initial plausibility. Instead we go along with the Trotskyist tradition to the extent of accepting that the Soviet Union can still be analysed as a form of socialist society, whose particular 'deformations' are explicable historically.

To be clear, by a *socialist* society we mean one transitional between capitalism and communism, the latter being characterised by a high level of material productivity and the absence of classes and the state. As Mao suggests, this transition may take several centuries, as did that from feudalism to capitalism. With Bettelheim we would add that to speak of transition by no means implies a one-way corridor or an automatic progression. The entire transitional era is one of struggle between elements of capitalist and communist modes of production at all levels of the social structure. There is, therefore, always a possibility of retrogression or stasis, and we see no reason to rule out in advance the possibility of evolution into a third option either. Where we part company with the Trotskyists is over the nature and explanation of Soviet 'deformations'. We do not think it accurate to characterize the Soviet problem as being predominantly an issue of the deformation of the Soviet *state* or to draw the conclusion that a merely political rather than a social revolution is all that is required to set things right. Nor, as we have argued earlier, do we believe 'degeneration' to be explicable in terms of the backwardness/betrayal couplet. Instead we see the struggle between capitalist and communist roads extending into the sphere of material production itself, and argue that the specific weight of Bolshevism needs to be taken into account if we are to grasp the distinctive forms this struggle has assumed in the USSR as well as the particular deformations it has generated. In particular, these correctives to the Trotskyist analysis must be made if we are to understand the roots of the statism endemic to Soviet socialism.

The Achievements of Soviet Society

Interviewed recently on the significance of the October revolution, its greatest historian, E. H. Carr, took pains to emphasise that 'the danger is that we shall be tempted to forget altogether, and to pass over in silence, its immense achievements... I am thinking of the transformation since 1917 in *the lives of ordinary people*'. Raymond Williams

agrees: 'it was one of the two or three great moments of human history. It is as simple as that'. We believe this is the proper place for any socialist assessment to begin.

In 1896 life expectancy in Russia was 32 years. In the USSR today it is 70. This compares with 71 in the USA, 72 in the UK, and 35 in India. Housing, transport, medicine, and insurance consume 15 per cent of an average Soviet family's income as against 50 per cent of their American counterparts. A recent British estimate puts expenditure on rent and utilities (telephones, laundry, etc.) in the USSR at no more than 8 per cent of average household income. Essentials of life are deliberately priced low and kept low: inflation during the 1960s and 1970s has averaged between 0.8 and 1.2 per cent per annum, but rents, for instance, have not risen since 1928. At the same time real wages of office and factory workers are claimed to be 3.7 times the 1940 level. Equally important is the 'social wage', and the guarantees of work, housing, etc. unknown in the West. There is no significant unemployment, but there is a statutory minimum wage and pension. There are proportionally more than twice as many full-time students as in Britain or West Germany, and much more extensive provision of public cultural, educational and recreational facilities. Books and records, for instance, are deliberately cheap, and all indices show a more actively literate population than in the West. Similarly, medical care is state-provided, and there are proportionately more—and far more equitably distributed—doctors than in most capitalist countries (32.7 per 10,000 of population as against 21 in the USA and 15.7 in Britain). The list could be continued.

None of this denies particular blackspots in provision or the lower overall standards of consumption compared with UK or US averages—though the large numbers *below* the headline in the latter (let alone in 'third world' capitalist states) need emphasis. Nor do we dispute the (exaggerated) material inconveniences of the much-trumpeted waste, shortages and corruption consequent on the shortcomings of the Soviet form of planning. It is the priorities we wish to draw attention to. Notwithstanding a consistent squeeze on consumption in the supposed interests of accumulation, there has always been a recognized commitment to securing the basics of life for all the people. Taken with the crucial absence of a capitalist labour market this underpins a working-class experience of *not* being subject to Marx's 'violence of things'.

We would equally stress the vitality of what can only be called a socialist culture—however compromised—in Soviet society. This is less easily measured: it lies in the differences in the statues in public squares or how mining disasters are commemorated. To take a recent illustration, when the swimming pool for the 1980 Moscow Olympics was completed, the first people to swim in the inauguration ceremony were representatives of the workers who built it. This event was televised across the USSR. A small thing no doubt, and easily sneered at. So let us for a moment suppose that such events and images are mere tricks to lull the workers into believing they live in a workers' state. We must still ask: which capitalist government thinks the workers important enough to merit such flattery? And in any case, what is the

likely effect on workers' self-esteem and assertion of being surrounded by *these* images of themselves and their importance as distinct from the kind pumped out daily by the capitalist media?

In sum we would argue that the Soviet working class inhabits an environment of expectations and evaluations which is both very different from that of its capitalist counterparts and, in the respects we have pointed to so far, specifically socialist. In their way, the much-cited 'surliness' of Soviet shop assistants or 'bloodymindedness' of Soviet workers are a kind of backhanded testimony to this. The empty and ritualistic character of much 'official' Soviet political life—single candidate elections, a rubber-stamp 'parliament' (the Supreme Soviet)—is similarly double-edged in its significance. Too often it is taken as simply another index of Soviet workers' powerlessness. What this ignores, in the simplemindedness of the search for equivalents of 'our' institutions, is that the formality of Soviet politics *also* testifies to a diffusion of politics *throughout* the society and a partial overcoming of capitalism's separation of the political sphere. Soviet 'politics' is largely ritual because most areas of Soviet life are subject to direct, though not necessarily democratic, political discussion and control. There is less place for a separate polity. As a consequence far less of Soviet social life appears mysterious or subject to quasi-natural 'laws'.

Survivals of Capitalism

To turn now to the survival of elements of capitalism in the USSR and the deformations which mar and restrict the socialist features we have outlined. To begin with, we fully accept that to eliminate *all* vestiges of the capitalist mode of production demands: (1) the development of social productiveness beyond levels attained in the so-called 'advanced' capitalist states, and (2) defeat of the capitalist class internationally. Without the first, the 'real separation' of production units, which Bettelheim rightly sees as the enduring foundation-stone for capitalist production, will persist. Without the second, some form of state must remain necessary, and class struggles will be prone to take nationalistic forms. Communism cannot be built in a single country. But in our view Bolshevism bears an additional responsibility both for the persistence of many capitalist features in Soviet society and for many of the deformations of its socialist elements.

All major Bolshevik strategies for socialist construction, from Lenin to Brezhnev and including the main oppositions both right and left, have demonstrably shared the problematic we outlined earlier. Their disagreements have been articulated within its boundaries. Much of the evident 'convergence' between certain social relations in Soviet and capitalist society, we submit, needs no further explanation than this. It does not stem from the 'imperatives' of 'industrial society', so much as from the Bolsheviks' *belief* in such imperatives and active pursuit of *policies* designed to implement them. This is especially true of relations between town and country (dominated by capitalist models of primitive accumulation) and within the labour process (dominated by capitalist models of efficiency and productivity). A book like Harazi's *A Worker in a Workers' State* (actually about factory life in Hungary) documents

one sort of direct consequence of Bolshevik obeisance to bourgeois images of modernization: just how little the experience of work differs in crucial respects—monotony, boredom, lack of control, coercion by piece-rate and bonus systems—in sum, alienation. But Trotsky, for example, was very well aware of this. The replication of capitalism's divisions of labour 'in the work shop' has broad repercussions. Consider the implications for, say, the education system, which in the ussa is highly elitist and perceived as first and foremost a competitive vehicle of individual social mobility. This cannot but represent an immense fetter on the socialist culture we spoke of above, tending to marginalize and render it rhetorical.

A final set of consequences deserves particular emphasis. So far as we are aware ours is the only Marxist position to stress the intimacy of the connection between this replication of core features of capitalist social relationships through Bolshevik economism, and the prevalent forms of Soviet politics. In particular we believe the *statism* which is the most manifest deformation of Soviet socialism owes much to Bolshevism's approach to production. Economism and statism connect directly via the huge fiscal and planning apparatuses needed to administer programmes of socialist construction which can only rely on the kind of passive, controlled (and typically Bolshevik) mobilization from below typified by Stakhanovism, because any fuller emancipation of direct producers would require (or threaten) a challenge to relations held indispensable to 'modernization'. The problem here is a general one. If socialist control is denied to producers at the point of production, it can only be re-established through external—national and state—agencies of regulation and coercion. The parallel with the bloated state forms that social-democratic governments develop when they try to use the state to establish a measure of social control over untransformed capitalist enterprises is not fortuitous. Moreover, because such programmes both defer immediate expectations and give the promised eventual socialist transformation the external and imposed quality of a paternalistic donation, we are thinking here particularly of what 'socialism' must have come cumulatively to mean in the experience of Soviet peasants—a formidable machinery of repression also becomes necessary if Soviet power is to be maintained. The net result is a vicious circle which has repeated itself throughout Soviet history. An increasingly expensive and burdensome state blocks productive advance in a multitude of ways. The inefficiency, waste and corruption is real enough, even if some of what is analysed in these terms in fact represents socialist priorities (these vocabularies are not neutral). The remedy for the blockage *economically* is seen to be judicious application of the latest in proven capitalist 'technique'. *Politically* this is seen as demanding further tightening of the screw of state . . . And so ad nauseam, in a depressing dialectic whose ultimate paradox is that failing any all-round revolution from below, defence of what *is* socialist in the ussa depends upon the brutal state machinery of Bolshevism remaining intact and vigilant.

The Challenge: Defining a Socialism from Below

In our view what the experience of Bolshevism shows above all is that the relations of capitalist development cannot simply be abstracted and

applied for socialist ends under socialist management as if they were neutral techniques. The political costs, in terms both of the inflation of the State and the impoverishment of socialist politics by their separation from production and the producers should by now be clear enough. But we would also argue that the costs will in the end be non-productive as well; for any short-term gains of 'using' capitalism to build the material 'base' for socialism are attained through the direct erosion of the conscious, co-operative and egalitarian relations whose extension is the fundamental condition of any *sustained* socialist productive advance. Capitalist relations between people stifle socialism's greatest productive force—the creativity, the experience, the skills, knowledge and enthusiasms embodied in the community of producers. Socialism is centrally about creating the social conditions in which that force is unleashed for the common wealth.

To achieve this entails *recognising differences*. One way of depicting what we mean by this (others are possible: it is a metaphor, not a model) involves a shift in the dominant imagery of socialism, away from the Plan as its supreme and defining feature. Instead we should envisage the hegemony of a general line: a body of guidelines and objectives, rather than of detailed instructions, which foster (rather than compel or guarantee) socialist advance, not by a calculus of a fiscal and quantitative character—that 'rigid, national, centralised system of accounting' Lenin so often called for—but by the encouragement they give to the attainment of local collective power and material security. Such a general line would attempt to synthesize experience and highlight exemplary transformations, but its detailed application would be a matter for local collectivities themselves to decide. Party and State would be correspondingly less evident in the lives of the people, except through their necessary safeguarding of the national conditions of existence of socialist construction, and their provision of such large-scale means as no single collective could hope to generate internally. Their apparatuses would be correspondingly minimal. For this form of *human* emancipation we need a different conception of what politics might be. The priority must be a continuing cultural revolution which recognizes and establishes rational forms for the ubiquity of class and other struggles. The latter, including struggles against forms of gender, racial and ethnic oppression, are also crucial to the abolition of human exploitation. Only through this expanded concept of revolutionary politics can we ensure that differences are not perpetuated as disadvantages, but, rather, are celebrated and encouraged. As Raymond Williams notes of Bahro, socialist 'human emancipation is intrinsically and as a matter of principle, more diverse than any philosophical definition'. Socialist construction must recognize, with Marx, that a mode of production is a 'mode of life' and its transformation must be correspondingly total. Most importantly, we must not allow politics to become sundered from either 'production' or the 'personal', nor become localized to a restricted set of institutions, issues and occasions and, therefore, in the end a privileged body of people.

Poland—Hopes and Fears Tamara Deutscher

'Nobody can say yet whether this year will enter history as the year of the victory of the socialist model of liberty . . . or as that of a new collapse.'

Zygmunt Warynski, 6 December 1980

The tremors that shook Poland during the 'hot' summer of 1980 precipitated an autumn full of tensions, hard bargaining, trials of strength, strikes and compromises. At the impressive and extraordinary ceremony at Gdansk on the 16th of December, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the shooting of shipyard workers, the main protagonists in the previous dramas—the new trade union Solidarity, the Church and the government—seemed to have achieved a tentative reconciliation. Nonetheless the way ahead remains unclear and uncertain. There is no question of going back to the old days when the country was ruled by simple fiat of the party hierarchy. If previously every city and town, every industry and every plant was governed by a decree from above, today those issuing decrees must carefully ponder all possible objections which may be raised before they adopt any economic plan, determine the level of productivity, fix wages and prices, or take decisions on educational or cultural policy. Suddenly everything has become arguable and open to debate. The party's former monopoly over economic policy is now shared with Solidarity, while the Church has extended its access to the media and its privileges within the educational system. The party itself has been shaken by the events and it is unclear if the leadership can restore its dominance within its own apparatus—much less within society at large. The working class that moved to the forefront of the political scene—uncowed, self-confident and conscious of its power versus the employer-state—has shown its unity and determination. In its historic conflict with the State it wrested significant reforms from a party whose leaders seem to have fallen into shock at the sight of the big battalions facing them. The workers maintained the initiative throughout the contest and the response to their demands was surprisingly quick, without prolonged bureaucratic haggling; even, here and there, tinged with a stealthy admiration. The fear that the concessions granted may be 'eroded'—to use a fashionable word—is not without foundation. But even more 'eroded' has been the authority of a party which emerges out of each successive contest more shaken and in deeper crisis.

The upheaval of 1980 was preceded and prepared by the events of 1956, and more recently by the crises of 1970 and 1976. These occasions have all demonstrated that even under one-party rule it is still possible to bring about changes at the top by militant pressure from

below. In 1956 Gomulka, who had been in Stalin's days under a virtual house arrest, assumed power by the will of both the 'liberal' wing of the party as well as by that of the broad masses of the working class and the intelligentsia. Fourteen years later he was ousted during the great strike wave of workers on the Baltic coast which he had tried to suppress with force of arms.¹ The once acclaimed 'Comrade Wieslaw' was chased away amid the sound of police and army bullets turned against the workers and in the glare of fires burning down the party headquarters in Gdansk. At this point Edward Gierek was despatched post-haste from his stronghold in the mining district of Silesia to the Baltic. He won the confidence of the striking workers through his ability to project himself as 'one of them.' Indeed he was a former miner with a long and admirable background of proletarian militancy; in his youth he had worked more than twelve years as an immigrant labourer in French and Belgian pits, while fighting in the ranks of the Communist parties of both countries. After 22 years he returned to Poland again only in 1948. He must have been regarded with distrust in Moscow as the only Polish Communist leader with a Western background. 'I am not afraid of you, comrades. . . . since you know what I am—OK? I am a worker. If we workers can't reach an understanding, who can?' Thus he spoke to the Szczecin strikers a decade ago. About the shooting incidents he said, 'We condemn such things.' He and the party seem, in fact, to have remembered the lessons of 1970, and a 'no shooting' policy has been strictly adhered to by Gierek's successor, Stanislaw Kania, formerly in charge of security and the army, who became the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) on 6 September.

The Workers' Defence Committee (KOR)

The cooperation between the workers and the intelligentsia, so important in the latest stage of struggle, dates from September 1976. At that time the government, under the pressure of concerted protests and threats of a general strike, rescinded unpopular price increases but proceeded to victimize the most active militants. A group of prominent lawyers, professors, lecturers and writers set up a Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), ostensibly as a semi-charitable organization providing financial and legal aid for victims of persecution as well as monitoring and exposing the worst cases of corruption and police brutality. KOR is by no means a homogeneous body, although most of its members profess some sort of socialism. It has become a principal thorn in the flesh of the authorities who, anxious to make some show of adherence to legality and afraid of antagonizing the most articulate segment of society even further, have confined themselves to sporadic arrests and harassment. One of the most harassed has been, of course, the *spiritus movens* of the whole enterprise, Jacek Kuron. Kuron is a man of courage and impressive energy, who has already endured two long sentences in prison. During Gomulka's leadership he was, together with K.

¹ In 1970 the students and intelligentsia remained generally aloof: they probably remembered that Gomulka had succeeded in manipulating the workers to break up their own demonstrations in Warsaw in 1968 (the Polish echo of the worldwide 'événements du Mai').

Modzelewski and a few other friends, deprived of liberty for circulating an 'Open Letter' to the party in which they exposed the bureaucratic ossification of the regime.² It was a cogent critique from the left, consciously or unconsciously in the tradition of the Bolshevik Opposition (and especially of Bukharin) of the late twenties. Moreover it was reported that after their sentencing, Kuron and his comrade defiantly sang the Internationale in court. Such a gesture on his part would be unthinkable today. He has moved towards social democracy, the Church and a nationalistic position. Michnik, now his close collaborator, has very explicitly stated in a letter to *Figaro* (the right-wing Paris daily) that Kuron should not be judged today on the basis of the views which he held fifteen years ago and which he has now definitely abandoned.

One of the activities of the KOR at the end of the seventies which received considerable attention in the West was the creation of the so-called 'flying universities'. These were clandestine popular gatherings addressed by dissident academics on subjects banned from the curricula of the official universities and schools. They were partially inspired by an old patriotic tradition dating back to the nineteenth century when partitioned and subjugated Poland fought against the forcible Germanization and Russification of her youth. To keep alive the vision of a sovereign and independent Poland and to preserve her cultural heritage was then, as now, the main aim of secret schools and universities. Since its inception KOR has, however, been considerably enlarging its activities. It launched a number of *samizdat* publications and acted as a midwife to a multitude of committees: to defend peasants' rights, to protect believers, to unite students, and so on. By the end of the seventies it had demonstrated its obvious value to the working class and achieved a much closer contact and coordination with factory activists. The semi-clandestine newspaper *Robotnik* (The Worker), edited by a group loosely connected with KOR, played an important role in disseminating information which the government wished to suppress, coordinating strike action and often ensuring vital liaison between various local and regional strike committees. This undoubtedly increased the awareness, unity and solidarity without which there could not have been the same degree of common action. According to reports, the circulation of *Robotnik* jumped from the impressive number of 10,000 to the astonishing number of 50,000 during the turbulent months of August and September, while the paper, passed hand to hand, must have been read by many thousands more. KOR has also been able to mobilize public opinion in the West by maintaining close relations with sympathizers abroad. It now has, for example, an 'accredited' representative to the Socialist International.

The Gdansk workers fully recognized their debt to KOR when they insisted that a condition *sine qua non* of any negotiations with the government was the immediate release of Kuron and other oppositionists. Three weeks later, the workers protested in no uncertain terms against the accusations which had been made against KOR members:

² Cf. I. Deutscher, 'In defence of Kuron and Modzelewski,' *Marxism in Our Time*, Oxford 1969, p. 161.

'Those whom the propaganda calls "anti-socialist" forces have been for years putting forward theses which today . . . are the basis of national renewal. These slanders are a violation of the Gdansk agreements.' The activities of KOR have undoubtedly contributed to bridging the perennial gulf between 'brain and brawn.' Other groups of intellectuals have also played prominent roles. During the crucial negotiations between the Vice-Premier Jagielski on one side, and Lech Wałęsa, the charismatic leader of the strikers, on the other, the strike committee enlisted the help of experts and advisers—lawyers, economists and writers—in articulating demands and drafting documents. It is worth noting that the particularly important committee of experts in Gdansk³ was presided over not by a KOR activist, but by F. Mazowiecki, the influential editor of the Catholic review *Wież*, who had for ten years (1961–71) as a deputy to the Sejm represented the Znak group identified with Cardinal Wyszyński. In the spectrum of Catholic opinion, *Wież* is somewhat to the left of the Church hierarchy and takes pride in being an 'independent journal.' Although not a jurist, Mazowiecki was also apparently responsible for the text of the statutes of the federation of the autonomous trade unions.

The Twenty-One Demands

Of the famous twenty-one demands presented by the workers at the centre of the strike movement in Gdansk on 30–31 August to Vice-Premier Jagielski, the most momentous was, of course, the demand for the right to form autonomous trade unions, independent of state and party. Whatever the chicanery and the obstacles erected by those fighting a rearguard action, the new federation—under the name Solidarity—was within a relatively short space of three weeks allowed to deposit at the Warsaw District Court its statutes with a demand for formal registration. The name 'Solidarity' was adopted to avoid confusion with the old Central Council of the official trade unions which adopted a new subtitle: 'independent and self-governing.' Some three thousand people in joyful mood accompanied Lech Wałęsa to the registration office and then followed him to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers where a wreath adorned with white and red ribbons was solemnly laid.

The rejoicing, however, was premature. Although Solidarity had been recognized *de facto* it was still not registered *de jure*, as its statutes proved unacceptable to the Warsaw court. The government raised three objections against the statutes. First it noted with displeasure that the 'leading role of the party' was not explicitly acknowledged; second, it preferred a regional, rather than national, structure for Solidarity; and, third, it also objected to the clause barring those who belong to the leading organs of the party from assuming posts of responsibility in Solidarity. This last was regarded by the authorities as unconstitutional and a 'violation of human rights.' For Solidarity, on the other hand, it provided a safeguard against infiltration and manipulation from the inside. Among the other concessions granted under the pressure of the Interfactory Strike Committee, 'access to the media'

³ Five of the ten members of the committee also belonged to the Club of Catholic Intellectuals (KIK).

was so ill-defined that no hard-and-fast rule emerged. Did it mean that the official radio and TV would undertake to present the workers' demands, grievances and criticisms of the authorities? Would the new trade union weekly⁴ be truly free from censorship and able unequivocally to take the side of militant labour against the employer-state? Or will it be a Polish version of the Soviet *Trud*? Solidarity did manage to push the door of the mass media slightly ajar—but not so much for itself as for the Church, which now has been ensured the weekly transmission of Sunday Mass on television. It remains to be resolved who else, and in what form, will have access to the media to present viewpoints different from the official line.

Behind all these tactical-practical questions there looms, of course, much more fundamental problems determining the relations between the party, the state, the trade unions and society in general. In pure practical terms, the issue of *de jure* registration should not have presented such a great obstacle or precipitated such a profound escalation of the crisis. It was indeed difficult to see how the government, having already retreated so far, could withhold recognition from organizations embracing a preponderant majority of the unionized labour force. The official unions had been deserted by the mass of the working class. To maintain them as a legal fiction would have been much more damaging than gracefully abandoning them. The great battle for registration was finally won—in the nick of time—two days before a threatened national general strike. The Supreme Court quashed the verdict of the Warsaw Court and accepted the original text which had been submitted by Solidarity as legally valid. Although some face-saving formula including the contentious phrase about the 'leading role of the party' was put into an annex, it was a great victory for the workers and signalled a major retreat by the government and the party.⁵

The Second Act

If the battle for the registration of Solidarity brought the dénouement of the first act of the current drama, then the high point of the second act was sparked by the subsequent arrest of two workers, Narożniak and Sapicko, who managed to get hold of a secret document containing government guidelines for the treatment of dissidents. The document was interpreted, not without reason, as proof that the security forces had been mobilizing to crush the opposition. The directives betrayed such incredible ineptitude and lack of comprehension of the situation, however, that one might easily have suspected them of being forgeries. But the conduct of the arrests which followed the raid on the Warsaw

⁴ The printing presses were a gift sent by Western trade unionists who also provided financial assistance to the Poles. The principal benefactors included both the ruc and the AFL-CIO. One cannot help recalling that in 1926 it was the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions which offered striking workers in Britain over a quarter-million rubles in solidarity aid. But the offer was rejected because the General Council of the ruc feared the odium which might attach to the acceptance of 'Soviet gold.'

⁵ According to an account in *Le Monde* (12 November 1980), a group of prominent workers led by Wałęsa went directly from the Court to the Primate's Palace. Conveying to them 'warm greetings' from the Pope, Cardinal Wyszyński presented each of them with an autographed Holy Bible remarking with a smile: 'Here's a *Communiqué* which has not grown old.'

headquarters of Solidarity proved that the security forces were indeed devoid of foresight (or hindsight). Their provocative act immediately stirred new threats of a general strike as factories around the capital came to a standstill. The outrage against the arrests was reinforced by leaflets warning workers: 'Today Narożniak and Sapięło, tomorrow Wałęsa, and the day after—YOU.' As strike agitation broadened, the tension was dramatically increased by the prospect of a railway shut-down which the authorities claimed would 'endanger the safety of the country'—a euphemism for jeopardizing Soviet communication lines with East Germany. To call for release of those arrested were now added political demands which more radically challenged the legitimacy of the regime. The tables were turned as the workers demanded that the authors of the secret security document be brought to trial instead. The whole repressive apparatus of the Polish state was to be called into account, and even the release of Narożniak and Sapięło did not defuse the threat of a general strike. It was now to Wałęsa and Kuron, closeted together in Gdansk, that the government was forced to turn for mediation. Wałęsa's authority with the workers had its effect: a crucial showdown meeting of Warsaw Solidarity was postponed till after the party plenum—that is for a week or so—and the strikers were persuaded temporarily to return to work.

Thus, the movement which began as a trade union struggle for basic rights inevitably has acquired more political overtones. It is a cliché, but nonetheless true, that every movement possesses a momentum which pushes it beyond its initial aims; often it also goes 'off-course' and changes direction, adopting new goals which were neither visible nor contemplated by its original instigators. In the process the movement overtakes its leaders: the daring radicals of the initial stage seem almost conservative in comparison with the new radicals who come forward in the next stage. Anxious to preserve and consolidate the gains and achievements, the former attempt to exercise a restraining influence on the latter. Thus at first Wałęsa had consistently stressed the purely trade-unionist and non-political character of his activity, refusing to be drawn into political or ideological debates. He had also consistently regarded the threats of Soviet intervention, at which the government repeatedly hinted, as a tactic to blackmail the workers into submission. Barely two months later, his mission accomplished and Solidarity firmly established, Wałęsa was suddenly forced into a new and uncomfortable role. Genuinely afraid of the militancy of those of his supporters who 'amid wild applause' proclaimed that 'it's better to die on our feet than live on our knees,' Wałęsa became a tribune of moderation, urging the Warsaw workers to soften their demands and return to work. Against romantic outbursts he now warned that 'tanks and rockets could be the answer' to further escalation of demands.

The Burden of Polish History

The events of the last four months of 1980 have radically transformed the Polish political landscape. The new trade unions have defiantly refused to act merely as transmission belts between the party-state and the workers. But what will be their relationship in the future? Even if

the party continues to 'lead,' will not the new unions compete with it, acquire the accoutrements of political power, and become *de facto* a second party paving the way for a multiparty system? These questions are all the more difficult to answer as there has been no precedent for such a development in any of the countries commonly called socialist. Simultaneously the same questions encourage a backwards glance at the history of the Polish working class and the complex precedents of its traditions.

The rise of the Polish working class paralleled the sudden burst of industrialization which created young and restive proletariats in *fin de siècle* Moscow and St. Petersburg. Unlike in Russia, where the trade unions played an insignificant role in the revolution in comparison with the soviets and political parties, Polish unions acquired an autonomy and centrality to working-class life which was more akin to the Western European experience. From the Łódź explosion of May 1892, when more than two hundred rioting textile workers were cut down by cossacks, the Polish working class has repeatedly engaged the ruling state in great trials of strength in its efforts to establish free trade unions. It is sometimes forgotten that the sitdown strike was originally referred to in the West as the 'Polish disease,' while the May 1936 strike of the Warsaw trade unions was one of the great labour struggles of the inter-war period in Europe. Today's militants in the Lenin Shipyards or the Ursus Tractor Works are acting in the spirit of this tradition.⁶

But there is another dimension as well to the history of the Polish proletariat. From the late nineteenth century, Polish workers, banned from political activity or free association, linked their economic interests to the cause of Polish independence. Despite the attempt of the Luxemburgist Social Democrats (the *sojusz*) to appeal to Polish workers on the basis of an internationalist programme, the attraction of nationalism was redoubled by the absence of a significant Polish bourgeoisie: the immediate exploiter was typically a foreigner. The depth of national sentiment was underestimated by the Bolsheviks in 1920 when they expected that the Polish workers and peasants would be ready for a socialist revolution. When the Soviet troops pursued into ethnic Poland the forces of Piłsudski, retreating from the Ukraine, they encountered considerable resistance. Whatever the 'Miracle on the Vistula', where on 16 August 1920 the Poles stopped Budienny's cavalry, may have owed to French tanks and Weygand's strategy, it would have scarcely been possible without the rallying to the national banner of many Polish workers and peasants. (Sixty years later in the People's Republic of Poland this event was commemorated by a large crowd in the centre of Warsaw.) With the resurrection of independent Poland after 1918 the class character of economic struggles did tend to become more transparent, especially after the establishment in 1926 of Marshal Piłsudski's barely disguised military dictatorship, replete with concentration camps and torture. The fate of socialist as well as communist leaders in 'free' Poland, maltreated in prisons and in the notorious

⁶ See the evocation of Polish working-class tradition in Peter Green's 'The Third Round in Poland,' *NLR* 101/102, February-April 1977, pp. 73-4.

camps of Brzesc and Bereza, clearly demonstrated to the working class that their own rulers could be as ruthless as the hated national foes. But the internal class struggle and class consciousness had little time to develop before Poland was overwhelmed by the Nazi deluge and holocaust of September 1939.

The encouraging rebirth of the Polish labour movement after Liberation was aborted after a few years by the onset of the Cold War and the reactive Stalinization of Polish society. At the Polish Trade Union Congress of 1 June 1949, Alexander Zawadzki, the newly appointed trade-union boss, bluntly informed delegates that the traditional role of unions as defenders of the workers' economic interests was obsolete in a 'people's democracy controlled by the working class.' A new trade union structure, patterned after the Soviet mould, was organized to provide an adjunct to party and state management of production. But this forcible recasting of Polish trade unionism has never proven easy in the face of a Polish working class which retained both its deeply rooted national and class traditions. After passing through the sometimes violent fermentation of the successive worker insurgencies of 1956, 1970 and 1976, this admixture of nationalism and economic militancy erupted most spectacularly in the long summer of 1980. Hence the rather unusual spectacle (which has moved Harold Macmillan so much) of striking workers outside the Lenin shipyards kneeling in front of the altar during the celebration of the *Missa Solennis*, with a profusion of Polish flags fluttering overhead. Similarly the crucifix and the portrait of the Pope adorn the walls of the headquarters of the new autonomous unions in Gdansk—a sight as paradoxical and as potentially disquieting as that of Iranian demonstrators giving the clenched fist salute under a huge picture of the Ayatollah Khomeini. What is even more disturbing is the portrait of Marshal Pilsudski remembered for his invasion of the Soviet Union in May 1920, and not exactly as a friend of trade unions, socialism or democracy.

The Crisis Within the Party

How will the party, which has possessed a monopoly of political power for more than thirty years, act under the combined pressure of these political, social, national and religious aspirations? First of all, it is necessary to recall that however great may be the gulf between it and Polish society, the party nonetheless is not immune from these sentiments. Secondly, although it is prepared to mediate between its Soviet protector and its own working class, it does not relish its state of dependence. The PZPR has emerged from the conflict considerably shaken and increasingly aware and self-critical of its own weaknesses. Publically the party apparatus has resorted to the now classic ritual of searching for the 'guilty men' and promising once again to correct the 'errors of the past.' The promotion of Gierck's lieutenant, Kania, to the General Secretaryship of the party has something of the appearance of a nervous holding action. Until the outcome of the party congress in March, it will remain unclear to what extent the purges are merely a cosmetic operation or truly signify a more far-reaching recomposition of the party.

In the meanwhile the ominous figure of General Moczar looms on the horizon of power after his re-election to the Politburo in November. An ousted politician now dramatically returned to authority, Moczar is remembered as responsible for the anti-semitic campaign of 1968 which drove some thirty thousand Jews—including many distinguished Communists and resistance heroes—out of the country. As the head of the Supreme Control Commission, Moczar has held in his hands secret files on his political friends and foes alike. At the same time he has regained the chairmanship of the strategically important and ultra-patriotic ex-servicemen's association ZBOWIA (Union of Combatants for Freedom and Democracy) which he had been forced to relinquish after 1968. Moczar is a curious combination of seemingly contradictory characteristics: a pragmatist, a fervent nationalist, a life-long member of the Communist Party, a tough hardliner contemptuous of intellectual aspirations, and a self-proclaimed reformer. Because of his ideology or perhaps because of his conspicuous lack of one, he may be seen in Moscow as the eventual 'fixer' of the Polish situation. His courage as an organizer of the Polish armed resistance to the Germans was undeniable; now, together with his faithful partisans and surrounded by the glory of his wartime exploits, he occupies a special place in a society which values military heroism highly. The fact that he was removed from power by Gierek in 1971 also works to his advantage. He now emerges from the political wilderness in a similar fashion to Pilsudski's return from his retreat in Sulejów, or De Gaulle's from Colombey-lez-deux-Églises; with his hands 'unsullied' and bearing no responsibility for the misrule of the last decade. In 1968, in charge of the police and the army, he had brutally suppressed student demonstrations. Now returned to the Politburo, he has lost no time in declaring a war upon all those 'vengeful elements' allegedly behind Solidarity and trying 'to instill a hostility towards socialism.' He was obviously pointing an accusing finger at the intellectuals, and particularly at KOR and Kuron who is his *bête noire*. Yet about Solidarity itself, Moczar speaks in simple, plebian words of reasonableness and kindred nationalism.

While a power struggle simmers at the summit of the party, the base is in complete turbulence. The party leadership must more than ever feel like generals without an army when they see even the most faithful rank-and-file communists enrolling en masse in the new unions: by some estimates, as many as a third of the party's three million members may have now joined Solidarity. This coalescence of the party grassroots and the workers' opposition is the spectre which haunts the Politburo, since the party must rely upon the commitment of its membership if it is to restore its leading role in society, its ability to plan the economy and its capacity to absorb the ideological shocks which it has received. Significantly a section within the leadership now seems to be inclined to accept the sweeping changes introduced since August and to be prepared to make a success of the new arrangements. This current has been represented in the recent period by Tadeusz Fiszbach, the party secretary from Gdansk, in the Politburo and by Mieczysław Rakowski and a few others in the Central Committee. In the period preparatory for the March Congress this current will strive to strengthen its position and may benefit from the new assertiveness of the party grassroots.

The Economic Impasse

Regardless of which group—the Moczarites or the new reformers—ultimately establishes its ascendancy within the PZPR, the resuscitation of the economy will remain the life and death problem for the regime. With a current foreign debt of \$21 billion which is expected to double by 1985, the Polish economy is tottering on the edge of bankruptcy. The mere servicing of Poland's indebtedness to Western banks threatens to consume the total value of its annual exports. Meanwhile the very success of the new unions has exacerbated the economic crisis as the overall wage bill has increased by 20% in the aftermath of the summer strikes, while the gross volume of production has declined with the introduction of a shorter working week in heavy industry and mining. Simultaneously last year's harvest is reported to be poor with a 20% shortfall in potatoes, which still remain the nation's staple food as well as a chief fodder for pork production. Poland is similar to the Soviet Union to the extent that the low level of agricultural productivity constitutes an immense fetter on the entire economy. But while the Soviet agrarian problem reflects the continuing legacy of Stalin's brutal collectivization 'from above,' the dilemmas of Polish agriculture originate in a diametrically opposite situation: the preservation, rather than the destruction, of an inefficient class of peasant small-holders. Instead of a ruthless extermination of the 'kulak' stratum, the Polish state has allowed the peasantry's standard of living to increase more than any other layer of society. The old wooden hovels which were so monotonously characteristic of the prewar landscape have been replaced by brick buildings; children with big hungry bellies are a thing of the past. Now tv aerials adorn rural roofs while peasant children go to the universities and technical schools, abandoning the villages for good.

The enhanced social mobility of rural youth has drained the countryside of vigorous labour power as the average age of the farm population has risen to over sixty. More than 75% of all arable land is privately owned by this senescent peasantry while another 20% is worked by state farms and the rest is divided between various collectives and 'agricultural circles.' Despite the increase in peasant consumption, capital investment in the private sector remains low, the plough horse is still ubiquitous, and the average plot is too small to make efficient use of mechanization. The mismanagement of state farms has done little to encourage the peasants voluntarily to enter collectives. At the same time the system of fixed food prices (all important in maintaining the real level of industrial wages) discourages the small-holders from selling their produce to the government or expanding production. This scarcely veiled 'scissors crisis' has become a central obsession of state planning in Poland. The only way in which the government has been able to undertake the daunting task of squaring the circle of raising food prices (to increase agricultural production) without provoking a violent reaction in the working class has been by the creation of increasingly costly state subsidies. These food subsidies, in turn, have been a major cause of Poland's burgeoning foreign debt. The structural problem of retarded agricultural productivity, of course, has been magnified by incompetent and misconceived plans for rapid

industrialization, relying on western finance capital and Soviet loans. Polish planners have for too many years produced their blueprints behind closed doors, covered up each others' mistakes, tolerated no criticism or opposition, and, in general, have attempted to manage the economy in splendid isolation from the mass of *actual* producers. Now these producers have risen up to demand that the plans be scrutinized and that they be consulted.

Poland's Unholy Concordat

If the party has emerged from the crisis shaken and in disarray, Poland's other great bureaucratic complex, the Catholic Church, has seen its prestige and social weight considerably enhanced. Ironically in today's Poland there is little left of the prewar anti-clericalism which characterized both the socialist working class and the rightwing nationalist intelligentsia. This anti-clericalism was a protest against the juridical link between church and state. No marriage or divorce in prewar Poland was legal unless it had been granted and registered with a religious authority. Even a certificate of education was not valid without a mark in religious education. Both workers' parties, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Communist Party were anti-clerical, as were sections of the neo-fascist right. The small Christian Trade Union was uninfluential, while the Church, with its own extensive latifundia, antagonized the peasantry by its blatant support for the big landlords. The Church remained mute when Pilsudski's *soldateska* shot down striking miners in 1931 and again in 1937 when the state repressed a great strike of the peasantry. Its viciously anti-semitic hierarchy lifted not a finger when Polish students, aping their Nazi colleagues in Berlin, set up a 'bench ghetto' for Jews at Warsaw University in the 1930s (nor more recently did it protest against the anti-semitic campaign orchestrated by General Moczar in 1967-8). But if the Polish Church's reactionary alliances, its landholdings and enforced tithes all contributed to popular disaffection, it nonetheless retained a powerful hold on the Polish masses through its deep identification with nationalism. One of the unanticipated results of the postwar reforms (secularization of marriage, free education, etc.) was to remove the list of popular grievances against the Church while fortifying the role of clerico-nationalism as the traditional vehicle of Russophobia. The recomposition of the Polish proletariat by a flood of new immigrants from the priest-ridden countryside gave the Church a new influence on the urban working class. Although the contemporary Church still retains some of its old anti-semitic, obscurantist penumbra, it is distinguished from prewar Catholicism by a dynamic 'populism' and capacity to provide support and sanctuary to struggles of the masses (albeit within very carefully defined limits).

The Polish party, unable to neutralize the church or even prevent its re-proselytization of the Polish proletariat, has been forced to accede to an informal concordat and division of powers with the Catholic hierarchy. This extraordinary relationship between the atheistic state and the Roman Church, represented by the astute politician, Cardinal Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, is unique in the history of both Catholicism and Stalinism. It shows to what a degree two hierarchical, dogmatic and rigid institutions, ostensibly so antagonistic in principle,

can coexist in a symbiosis of power. The rapprochement between church and state dates back to 1956 when the regime's feeble attempts at collectivization were reversed and some of the Church's most valuable estates were returned. In exchange, Wyszyński supported Gomulka in the elections and assured him of the loyalty of the clergy who were henceforward instructed to refrain from clandestine anti-government activity. The Church was also given a semblance of representation in the Sejm as well as the right to publish its own newspaper. Admittedly, these concessions had to be used in 'moderation,' and the party has made several attempts to circumscribe the political influence of the Church, as with the reduction of Catholic Znak deputies in 1961. Yet the resurgence of the Church's power since 1956 has been spectacular. Mass attendance has increased, bishops' salaries were raised, new churches have been built (there are now three times as many as in the 1930s), a new generation of priests and theologians educated in state-supported seminaries, and the numbers of nuns tripled in comparison to the prewar period. The election of a Polish Pope, of course, gave a tremendous boost to the Church. To the religious it was a sign that Poland, its martyrdom and virtue rewarded, could now 'speak directly to God.' For more secularly inclined Polish nationalists, on the other hand, it dramatically reaffirmed that although Poles may be in the Eastern zone, they 'belong to Western civilization' (indeed, are a 'pillar' of that 'civilization'). The enormous crowds which accompanied the new Pope on his triumphal procession through his native country gave grateful expression to these intense feelings. In the words of one samizdat writer: 'The visit demonstrated with absolute clarity that in Poland only the party and the Church count as organized forces on the political scene, capable of mobilizing masses, of determining social atmosphere, ideological attitudes and political aspirations.'

Law and Order and the Church

Fully aware of its power to determine 'political aspirations,' the leaders of the Church gave only a lukewarm support to the workers during the great upheaval of 1970 which deposed Gomulka. Gierek had managed in time to ensure that no danger would threaten him from the religious quarter, and Cardinal Wyszyński echoed the official appeals for 'peace and calm.' In 1978 Wyszyński assured President Carter that Gierek 'had the interests of Poland at heart.' Later, at the height of the August mass strikes, he tried to temper the working class by warning them that 'there are times when you should not demand too much as long as there is order in Poland.' Indeed, only if there is 'order in Poland' can the church hierarchy preserve what it has managed to wrest so far from the state hierarchy. 'Law and order' are of paramount importance to the survival of both sides. Lech Wałęsa, who in the first phase of the summer upheaval came forward as the main challenger of the established order, has always been a favourite of the Church. When after many tense weeks of negotiations, however, it began to appear that the avalanche which he had done so much to start rolling might end in a debacle, Wałęsa and the Church began to exert a restraining influence within the workers' movement. Wałęsa, a faithful son of the Church, is also seen by the state as a 'safer revolutionary' than some of the dissident Marxists active in the base of Solidarity.

If until now 'only the party' and the Church counted as an organized force' in Polish society, how will the emergence of an autonomous labour movement affect the standing of the Church? What will be the role and relative weight of the Church within Solidarity one or two years from now? In other words, will the Church be able to maintain its virtual monopoly of *organized, centralized* opposition to the regime? In the past even that other segment of the opposition, the intellectuals—many of whom as sceptics, agnostics and atheists deplored the obscurantism and dogmatism of the Church—were in no position but to accept the Church as a valuable ally. In cooperating with the hierarchy, even with reservations and perhaps a guilty conscience, the intellectuals were publicly acknowledging it as the symbol of opposition. In the perverse world of Polish politics, to belong to the Church, to go to mass, was not necessarily an act of faith, but often only a legal expression of disapproval of the regime—all other avenues being barred. It is possible that if the new unions succeed in opening other legal channels for the expression of grievances that the Church will begin to lose some of its appeal. To some extent it has already voluntarily abdicated its monopoly of opposition by entering the government. On 21 November, Jerzy Ozdowski, a deputy of the rather amenable Znak, assumed the post of a vice-premier—an appointment approved by Cardinal Wyszyński who well understands the value of having 'his man' in the councils of state power. The Church is well aware that in the long run it will benefit far more from gradual concessions, enlarging its autonomy in education and propaganda, than from a confrontation that might end in a Warsaw Pact intervention.

Thus even if the Church loses its symbolic position as the sole recognized opposition, it is likely to retain its ideological influence. The dissident Polish intelligentsia have yet to elaborate, together with the working class, alternative political directions. Disillusioned with a Marxism which was pushed down their throats in a perverted, dogmatic form, many are tempted to retreat into confused eclecticism tinged with romantic illusions about bourgeois democracy. For all their tactical skill they have not so far produced a comprehensive political platform like the Czechoslovak 'Action Programme' of 1968. 'For the future,' said Kuron in 1978, 'we are thinking in terms of an organization of society outside the official regime, that is *de facto* pluralism without authoritarianism. We call that democratic self-management. It is at the same time a programme for today and a certain social vision.'⁷ Last year he asserted that the central task of the opposition was 'to organize society democratically in professional associations and cooperatives that are economically and locally self-managing.'⁸ The spirit of compromise displayed by both Solidarity and the government has helped to avoid disastrous confrontations. The vague, or reticent, declarations of the leading dissident intellectuals, and the caution of the reforming current within the party leadership, have also avoided needless provocation to the Soviet leaders. But something more than this will be needed to resolve Poland's grave economic problems and to channel

⁷ Quoted in A. Erard and G. M. Zieger (eds.), *La Pologne, une société en dissonance*, Paris 1978, p. 17.

⁸ From *Intercontinental Press*, 8 September 1980.

in a creative direction the impressive social forces unleashed by the mobilizations from July to November 1980. The fate of economic reconstruction, socialist democracy and proletarian self-organization are now bound up with one another, yet their integral connections do not yet furnish the programme for any of the influential protagonists. It would, of course, be a foolish optimism which pretended that the reconstitution of an authentic socialism could be spontaneously generated out of Poland's current struggles alone when the ideological and cultural high ground is still so dominated by Church and State. Indeed today the still active reflex of bureaucrat recidivism and the weakness of any secular alternative could set the stage for a disastrous dénouement to the crisis.

So far the Polish attempts at 'national renewal' have not jeopardized the security of the Soviet Union which can well afford a measure of toleration vis-à-vis its neighbour. Neither the Polish workers nor those in the West that support their *socialist* aims are a danger to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is threatened by cold warriors who exploit the legitimate aspirations of the Poles for their own ends: to maintain tension throughout the world, to feed hatred and fear, and to make another gigantic stride in the deadly arms race. It is sustained and determined opposition to such policies in solidarity with the Polish workers across the Cold War frontier, that may allay Soviet fears and help to dissuade the Kremlin from a disastrous military intervention.

Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation

The names of Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg have often been linked, sometimes with good reason and sometimes also without. It has been said, wrongly, that they shared before 1917 a common view of revolutionary prospects in Russia, Luxemburg like Trotsky supporting the idea of permanent revolution. With better foundation it has been noted that there was, in their respective tactical inferences from the events of 1905, a shared and early awareness of the organizational inertia and conservatism then taking shape within European socialism and a like belief in the efficacy of mass struggle as the antidote to this. Partisans of the self-activity of the masses, they put their faith in it in face of the dangers of party bureaucracy. Perhaps the most frequent association of the two revolutionaries has been by reference to the similar criticism they directed at Lenin—in the name precisely of proletarian self-activity—in 1904, following the Bolshevik-Menshevik split. That is the subject of the present article. For, if the fact of this common criticism is widely known, the two works in which it was articulated are differentially so. The full measure

and the details of their congruence have not been generally accessible because Trotsky's *Our Political Tasks* had to wait some three-quarters of a century before it became available in translation in the major European languages. Until very recently what was known of it, save by a small number of scholars, was known second-hand: some of its ideas; a few quotations; one passage in particular on the logic of political 'substitutionism', oft-cited, usually from Isaac Deutscher's work. Given the extent to which the diffusion of Trotsky's writings has depended on the efforts and resources of his own followers, the fate of *Our Political Tasks* is not really surprising. That its republication was accorded no priority stood in continuity with the reticence towards it of Trotsky himself. In fact, in the works of his later years there are only a couple of direct references to this youthful polemic. In one, he speaks of it as immature and mistaken in its criticism of Lenin, although he does allow that it justly characterized the mentality of some of the party activists of the day, for whom the principles of centralism had come to displace any need to rely upon the workers. In the other, his judgment is severe without qualification. On the question of organization *Our Political Tasks*, according to Trotsky, 'developed views very close to those of Rosa Luxemburg' and her views on organization are described by him as 'errors'.¹

A comparison of his pamphlet with Luxemburg's *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* shows the resemblance between them to be close indeed. I shall not undertake a comprehensive account of it here, but propose only to explore one important area of the common ground. My interest, however, is not in whether Trotsky and Luxemburg were in error or were justified in their criticisms, and these writings of theirs are searched neither for evidence of their shortcomings vis-à-vis Lenin nor for telling insights concerning the ulterior development of the Bolshevik Party. This is already well enough rehearsed. I want rather to identify in the positions they put forward, along with something of indubitable value, an ambiguity in the concept of party and, hence, a problem about the political representation of the working class; and to suggest that this problem, sometimes thought to be a specific feature of the Leninist idea of a revolutionary vanguard, was part of an older orthodoxy that Lenin shared with his Marxist critics. This is not, it should be said, an argument that revolutionary Marxism as such is irredeemably flawed, compromised and so forth. It is, rather, an indication of matters left unsettled and incomplete in classical doctrine, even where it spoke most vehemently for socialist democracy and on behalf of the self-emancipation of the working class.

We may begin from a passage of Luxemburg's *Organizational Questions*, setting out the 'contradictory' nature of the struggle for socialism: 'The world-historical advance of the proletariat to its victory is a process whose particularity lies in the fact that here, for the first time in history, the masses of the people themselves, against all ruling classes, are expressing their will. But this will can only be realized

¹ Leon Trotsky, *Stalin*, London 1947, p. 62; and "'Trotskyism" and the PCP', in *Leon Trotsky On France*, New York 1979, pp. 233-34.

outside of and beyond the present society. On the other hand, this will can only develop in the daily struggle with the established order, thus, only within its framework. The unification of the great mass of the people with a goal that goes beyond the whole established order, of the daily struggle with the revolutionary overthrow—this is the dialectical contradiction of the Social-Democratic movement which must develop consistently between two obstacles: the loss of its mass character and the abandonment of its goal, becoming a sect and becoming a bourgeois reformist movement.² Rosa Luxemburg's use of these lines here was not her first. She reproduced them very nearly verbatim from her earlier *Social Reform or Revolution*, which was well-known for its cogent statement of the anti-revisionist case.³ We may assume that Trotsky was acquainted with them from one or both of these sources. In his own polemic against Lenin, allusion is made to hers.⁴ In any case, whether because, knowing them, he also had these lines consciously in mind during the composition of *Our Political Tasks*; or only because the thought they express is in effect a familiar part of the Marxist legacy—the proletariat constituting there at once offspring and grave-digger of capitalism, produced by and formed within it, but bearing the prospect of its replacement by socialism—the fact is that there is a striking parallelism in the manner whereby Luxemburg delineates the twin pitfalls of reformism and sectarianism and Trotsky puts back-to-back, as it were, the Russian 'economists' and those charged by him with 'substitutionism'.

The Logic of 'Substitutionism'

He poses the issue in terms of the consciousness of the workers and their objective interests: 'Between these two factors—the objective fact of class interest and class awareness thereof—there lies a path filled with the jolts and blows of life, mistakes and disappointments, waverings and defeats. The problem of tactical wisdom for the Party of the proletariat is wholly enclosed between these two factors and consists in discovering how to shorten and make easier the path which lies between them. . . . The Party, basing itself upon *the given level of consciousness of the proletariat*, intervenes in every major political event, striving to bend the resultant in favour of the immediate interests of the proletariat and, what is even more important, striving to make its intervention a means of *raising* the level of the proletariat's consciousness. . . . The bigger the gap separating the objective and subjective factors . . . the more natural is the appearance in the Party of "methods" which in one form or another represent *surrender* to the colossal difficulty of the task imposed upon us. Like the political self-denial of the "economists", the political "substitutionism" of their antipodes is nothing but an attempt by a young Social-Democratic Party to "play

² 'Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy' (referred to henceforth as OQ), in Dick Howard (ed.), *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, New York and London 1971, p. 304.

³ 'Social Reform or Revolution', *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks* (referred to henceforth as OPT), London n.d. (1980), p. 106. Page references are to this edition, although all quotations are from an unpublished translation by Brian Pearce (for permission to use which I am grateful to NLS).

a trick" on history.' Neither 'economists' nor 'politicals', according to Trotsky, really face the questions of political tactics entailed by the distance between the proletariat's consciousness and socialism. The 'economists' only register its subjective interests, leaving everything else to the natural course of events; thus, trail along behind it and march '*at history's tail*'. The 'politicals' begin from its objective interests and, confident in their knowledge of them, act in place of the class and attempt 'to transform history *into their own tail*'.⁵ Luxemburg for her part, it may be remarked, hard by the lines I have reproduced from her article, chides Lenin and his supporters in very similar terms, writing sarcastically, '... the "ego" of the Russian revolutionary ... declares itself once again as the all-powerful director of history'; she speaks of it also as having 'played more than one trick' on the socialist movement in Russia.⁶ However, more important than such incidental echoes is a deeper thematic correspondence. In the contexts in which these passages from Luxemburg and Trotsky are respectively embedded they can be seen to be associated with the same theoretical message. It may be formulated in three linked pairs of oppositions purporting to contrast Lenin's with a more adequate standpoint.

The first and most obvious of them, no longer very interesting perhaps for having been gone over many times, is summed up in a slogan from *Our Political Tasks*: 'Long live the self-activity of the proletariat—and away with political substitutionism!'⁷ About this let it suffice to say that Luxemburg and Trotsky alike accuse Lenin of a sectarian error. In the political space—defined by both of them in an idiom of forward movement—between the proletariat, its consciousness and its struggles, on the one hand, and the final socialist goal, on the other, they accuse him of being too remote from the former out of a certainty of standing for, and knowing how to reach, the latter. Thus where, for Luxemburg, the socialist movement is the first historically to count on 'the organization and the independent direct action of the masses' and 'there is no ready-made, pre-established, detailed set of tactics which a central committee can teach its Social-Democratic membership as if they were army recruits', Lenin's views, she suggests, do precisely presuppose an 'omniscient' and 'infallible' central committee.⁸ For Trotsky, likewise, 'the guarantee of the stability of our Party must be sought in its basis, in an active and self-acting proletariat', and he protests against the 'utterly fantastic' and 'purely rationalist' conception according to which its development is to take place 'solely through the logical extraction, by a central committee ... of new tactical and organizational conclusions from certain theoretical premises.'⁹

The second contrast is simply the institutional correlate of the first, and opposes the requirements of socialist democracy to those of Leninist organizational centralism. The opinion of Lenin's critics about his centralism is, again, familiar enough not to have to be laboured here. The best-known lines of *Our Political Tasks*—envisaging the successive 'substitutions' of, first, the party organization for the party, then, the central committee for the party organization, and

⁵ *OPR*, pp. 74–77. ⁶ *OO*, pp. 305–6. ⁷ *OPR*, p. 72.

⁸ *OO*, pp. 288–89, 305–6. ⁹ *OPR*, pp. 95, 2.

finally, a dictator for the central committee—follow immediately on the passage depicting political ‘substitutionism’ and ‘economism’ as twins.¹⁰ Rosa Luxemburg’s thoughts about what she calls ‘ultra-centralism’ are no different, its spirit being according to her a ‘sterile’, policing one: to control the party, to narrow the movement rather than develop it.¹¹ As to the appeal to norms of socialist democracy which both she and Trotsky make against Lenin, it is, familiar as it may also be, the problematic area forming the main concern of this article and will be examined once we have at our disposal further argument which is germane to it.

For it is best approached in fact by way of the third and last of the aforesaid oppositions, one that has received much less attention than the others as far as I know. We may speak of it as contrasting an *historical* with a *formalist* political conception. I take the terms of the antithesis from Trotsky, but let us see first how it is expressed by Luxemburg. She attacks the notion that opportunism can be regarded simply as an alien presence within the labour movement, introduced there by forces that are representative of the bourgeoisie. She does concur with a definition of it according to which opportunism undermines the class independence of the proletarian movement, serving to subordinate it to bourgeois interests and ambitions. She concedes also that one of its sources is the large number of non-proletarians that gravitate to social democracy in a decomposing capitalist society, though she goes on to add that social democracy must not turn them away but learn how properly to integrate them and their dissatisfactions within a revolutionary socialist politics. However, she insists that opportunism has an additional source in the very nature of the struggle for socialism, as it is set out by her in the passage we have taken as our point of departure. If, in Marxist terms, the irreplaceable foundation of that struggle is the ‘will’ of the working class, a political will that is only formed and can only develop in the framework and the conflicts of bourgeois society, then this is bound to leave its mark, negatively as well as positively, on the course of the struggle itself. Imposed or merely encouraged by the initial, capitalist framework, there will be both misconceptions and mistakes. The socialist movement has to learn through hard experience.

Lenin’s Subjectivism

This is, if you want, a ‘dialectical’ thought, and where it occurs in *Social Reform or Revolution*, it is supported by the passage from Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire* on the relentless self-criticism integral to the proletarian revolution. In any event, on the basis of it Rosa Luxemburg reproaches Lenin for the ‘totally ahistorical illusion’ that opportunist errors can be averted once and for all. Although Marxist theory certainly furnishes powerful weapons against them, they arise ‘from social conditions’, those surrounding a mass movement. Seen in this light ‘opportunism appears as a product of the labour movement itself, as an unavoidable moment in its historical development’. In Russia it is very much a result of the ‘tactical groping and experimentation’

¹⁰ *OWT*, p. 77. ¹¹ *OWT*, p. 295.

inevitable in difficult political conditions. It is therefore astonishing, says Luxemburg, 'to think that . . . one could prevent the appearance of the opportunist current through this or that paragraph of the party constitution', exorcise it 'by means of a scrap of paper'.¹²

The same theme is to be found in the young Trotsky more fully elaborated. Already in 1903, before the appearance of Luxemburg's and his own texts here being compared, his report on the Second Congress of the Russian Party at which the Bolshevik-Menshevik schism had occurred made reference to Lenin's 'sterile formalism'. In part, what Trotsky meant by the term was the sort of thing we have just seen Rosa Luxemburg deploring: the 'bureaucratic dream' of achieving through the Party rules a 'statutory remedy for opportunism'.¹³ But more generally he had in mind a whole sectarian posture which too one-sided a reaction to 'economism' had tended to produce. Responding to 'economism', in particular to its closeness to the day-to-day concerns of the workers, as to a pure and simple error, Lenin's supporters had been led, he thought, to espouse only the forms and not the substance of revolutionary politics and organization. As he put it, 'for many comrades, both "politics" and "centralism" still have only *formal significance*, as the mere antitheses of "economism" and "amateurism"'. Political agitation dealt largely in conventional formulas 'too little linked with the actual life and everyday demands of the working masses'; centralism also was seen by these comrades abstractly, as a self-sufficient form instead of as the 'synthesis of local and general organizational tasks'. Suggesting that amongst the Bolsheviks was to be found a number of former 'economists', who had thus merely exchanged their original mistaken abstraction for its inverse, Trotsky summed up this line of reasoning in the following way. 'Whereas previously, in the period of "economism", these comrades could not or would not link the trade-union and group interests they served with the general tasks of class politics, which they ignored, now, in the era of "politics", they are showing themselves incapable of linking the tasks of revolutionary political struggle, to which they give formal recognition, with the immediate, everyday demands and, in particular, with trade-union and sectional needs. Whereas previously, in the era of "amateurism", they could not or would not link in their minds the detailed tasks of local work with the need to create a fighting central apparatus for the Party as a whole, now, in the full flood of "centralism", they completely leave out, in their discussions and decisions concerning this apparatus, all the *practical complexity and concreteness for the Party* of the tasks to which this apparatus must adapt itself, the tasks for the sake of which it is created. And this is why . . . the rectilinear, i.e., purely formal, "centralism" of Lenin found among its most decided supporters . . . some of yesterday's "economists"'.¹⁴

The Historical Roots of Opportunism

There should be no need to emphasize the homogeneity between the

¹² OQ, pp. 301-5; and see 'Social Reform or Revolution', p. 132.

¹³ Leon Trotsky, *Report of the Siberian Delegation*, London n.d. (1980), p. 21. See the remarks in note 4 above which apply here too.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 18-20.

foregoing arguments from Trotsky's report and the manner in which he speaks in *Our Political Tasks* about 'substitutionism'. For, he characterizes this similarly as an attempt to bring forward 'the abstract force of the class interests of the proletariat' in lieu of 'the real force of a proletariat conscious of its class interests'; outlining, by contrast, a conception in which political development takes place 'only through the reciprocal action of "will" and "consciousness"' as he puts it—that is, 'when, on the basis of the level of consciousness achieved, we organize, by appropriate tactical methods, the political will of the class.'¹⁵ What may, however, be worth digressing to point out is the line that runs between this particular preoccupation of two of his earliest political writings and a central theme in the programmatic document written by him more than thirty years later for the founding conference of the Fourth International.¹⁶ Because in the first case Trotsky writes against Lenin, whereas in the second he does so as a convinced Leninist, it is easy and has been a common practice, especially amongst his own followers, to overlook the continuities between these anti-Leninist texts of the earlier period and some of his later ideas. This is a mistake. Here, for example, there is a strong continuity in both the content and the terms of the reasoning as, in youth and maturity alike, he urges the indispensability of seeking the links between revolutionary programme and organization, on the one hand, and the immediate demands and popular consciousness of the working class, on the other.

Focusing again on the third of our oppositions, between formalist and historical conceptions, a good part of the burden of *Our Political Tasks* is that Lenin and his supporters neglect this, the supremely difficult tactical problem, believing, in sectarian spirit, that political wisdom and success are vouchsafed to them by their Marxist doctrine. Trotsky, needless to say, does not challenge the merits of the latter. But he does impugn any claim to their exclusive possession and, like Luxemburg, he questions above all the idea that Marxism might constitute a full and permanent defence against political error. Indeed, some of the most cogent passages of his text, relevant and resonant beyond their own immediate historical context, touch on these matters. In its internal conflicts to date, he contends, the different groupings in Russian Social Democracy have all appealed to the class interests of the proletariat as their legitimating criterion—the tribute paid by a section of the revolutionary intelligentsia to Marxism—and the recurrent theme has been condemnation of adversaries for an 'unconscious betrayal of the proletariat' in favour of bourgeois interests. Whilst, according to Trotsky, such common appeal to one recognized value has had a certain positive, regulative function, enabling the existence and overcoming of difference without division, nevertheless the precise method of mutual criticism is a 'primitive' one. One tendency 'anathematizes' another; each sees its predecessor as 'nothing but a gross deviation from the correct path . . . a bundle of errors'. It is in this connection, against the habit of simply sweeping aside whole

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 77, 47.

¹⁶ See Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, New York 1973, pp. 75, 108-9.

political trends, that he commends what he calls 'an *historical* standpoint' in questions of internal Party development.¹⁷

It is not that Trotsky, for his part, denies there have been mistaken political trends. We have seen the reproofs he directs at both 'economists' and Bolsheviks. But he identifies the conditions for their mistakes in the historical experience of the Russian movement, thus defines a sense in which they were necessary mistakes, as well as warning where misguided trends, unchecked, might terminate. He also indicates such valuable features of that experience as they express—the arousal by the 'economists' of 'broad strata of the proletariat' and their work amongst the masses, even if it was not yet socialist political work; *Iskra's* determined fight, which in time spawned the exaggerations of Bolshevism, to win a part of the intelligentsia for Marxism and the interests of the proletariat, even if this work was not yet directly aimed at the proletariat itself. The calls simply to 'liquidate' one or another recent tendency must, Trotsky says, be rejected as jeopardizing a political culture painfully acquired. On the other hand, 'Every period develops its own inertia and tries to foist its own tendency upon the movement as a whole.' This is where diversions and mistakes must occur, and the movement be endangered if it is not alert to the problem: a worthwhile but limited political quality is improperly accentuated or prolonged, exceeds its legitimate sphere or outlives its usefulness. In Trotsky's words, '... every *partial process* in the general class struggle of the proletariat . . . produces its own immanent tendencies: its methods of thinking, its tactical procedures, its specific slogans and its specific psychology. . . . Every partial process strives to go beyond the limits set by its nature and to impose its tactics, its way of thinking, its slogans and its morality upon the entire historical movement which has called forth this partial process. The means is turned against the end, the form against the content. . .'.¹⁸

Now this whole dialectic, of experience, experiment and error, of critical adjustment and correction in the light of them, of misconceptions generated by the social environment and mistakes that are due to the inertia of the movement itself, our two authors champion against Lenin in the name of a more historical sensibility than he allegedly displays and as though, bent on tutelage of Russian Social Democracy, he was ignorant of or, perhaps, just wilfully blind to it. There are many who will agree that so he was. There are, equally, those who will doubt or deny it. Irrespective, however, of whether he was an appropriate object of this censure, there is a point in the stance adopted by Trotsky and Luxemburg that bears close scrutiny, a point at once valuable to any contemporary Marxist reflection on socialist democracy and seriously limited by an orthodoxy of its own time. In contrasting their own with Lenin's attitude to, respectively, economism and opportunism, Trotsky and Luxemburg are speaking of reformist tendencies deeply antipathetic to their natures and which they reject categorically as misconceived. By their own theoretical lights, these are political tendencies that, pressed to the end, must lead

¹⁷ OET, pp. 8-12.

¹⁸ OET, pp. 16, 30-31, 38, 94 and *passim*.

their proponents to break with the proletarian cause or the proletariat itself into bourgeois paths and away from socialism.¹⁹ Yet, criticizing as one-sided and ahistorical any characterization of the currents in question that stops at this, the two unite in refusing to regard them as just a foreign or treacherous element in the workers' movement. Mistaken they are, but they are its own mistakes; a part of its own experience and not just something alien, some illegitimate intrusion. Mistakes are the movement's right and its destiny also, since it is set about by obstacles of every kind, material, political and ideological, and its path cannot but reflect their presence. We may put this in another way. Such tendencies may be wrong, diversionary, unwarranted exaggerations of a partial truth or what have you when tested against criteria of Marxist theory, and insofar as they are not only theoretical abstractions but also actual currents of political opinion, be simultaneously a legitimate part of the workers' movement. In this sense, the order of theoretical knowledge and the order of political belief and alignment are distinct. Differences in the second must be resolved through processes of debate and competition and by practical political experience. They cannot be settled by the authority of a profounder knowledge, be it real or only claimed, by bureaucratic regulation from above, be this ever so scientifically informed. The only truly authoritative resolution is democratic.

Marxist Pluralism ?

I extrapolate here, in other words, a pluralist principle. This is a Marxist conception of working-class democracy allowing for points of view other than one's own and even though they may be thought either tendentially or actually to compromise the very goal of socialism. I shall not argue for the pluralist principle, but simply lean on the record of 'actually existing socialism' which speaks eloquently enough in its behalf as a negative example, and on a considerable literature in moral and political philosophy which supports it more directly. That such support has frequently been associated with defences of private property does not invalidate the principle nor devalue it where, as in the present case, the perspective it belongs to is clearly socialist. It is distinguishable from any vindication of capitalism; no worthwhile form of democracy is possible if it is not respected. What I want to explore is the institutional embodiment envisaged by Trotsky and Luxemburg for this democratic and pluralist principle both of them invoke in their criticism of Lenin. What actual institutional norms, if any, do they propose—concerning the organization and representation of the working class, accountability of political leaders, and so on—which might help to lend a more discernible shape to their broad commitment?

In the first place, and predictably given the polemical context, both put forward what they consider to be a healthier concept of social-democratic centralism than Lenin's, arguing that it must be founded on the will and initiative of the party's rank-and-file membership and not on mere dictates sent down from some leading body. Luxemburg says

¹⁹ *ORT*, p. 9, *OQ*, p. 301; and see also 'Social Reform or Revolution', p. 130.

it can be based neither 'on blind obedience, nor on the mechanical subordination of the party militants to a central power'; that it 'is, so to speak, a "self-centralism"', the 'rule of the majority within its own party organization'; that it has 'a coordinating, synthetic character and not a regulative and exclusive one'.²⁰ Trotsky deprecates the kind of thinking in which the 'summit' of the organization 'becomes the centre of Social-Democratic consciousness, with, under this centre, disciplined executants of technical functions', and maintains against it that any non-autocratic centralism 'presupposes *active participation by all members of the Party in general Party life*'.²¹ Secondly, Trotsky has something schematic to say about the nature of proletarian democracy in the period of socialist transformation. Referring to the experience of the Paris Commune, he talks of the political power of the working class as involving a cultivation of 'the habit of exercising constant, active control over all the executive personnel of the revolution'. He is explicit here, moreover, about the pluralist requirement. In connection with protesting against Blanquist organizational concepts and a Jacobin notion of dictatorship, he comments on the 'colossal' social, economic and political problems that will be thrown up by the dictatorship of the proletariat and continues: 'The tasks of the new regime will be so complex that they cannot be fulfilled otherwise than by competition between different methods of economic and political construction, by prolonged "controversies", by systematic struggle—not only between the socialist world and the capitalist world but also between different tendencies within socialism, tendencies which will inevitably appear as soon as the dictatorship of the proletariat gives rise to tens and hundreds of new problems for which no-one has ready made solutions.'²² In Luxemburg's essay there are no comparable remarks on the physiognomy of proletarian rule, though these do, as it happens, anticipate sentiments that she was to express in 1918 and, by an irony the historical reasons for which are well enough known, address to Trotsky himself, as well as to Lenin, as follows: 'The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party. . . . This is, unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—not the case. . . . New territory. A thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations . . . corrects all mistaken attempts.'²³

The Party: Two Ideas

However, if we leave aside what our protagonists were to write later and dwell upon 1904, then it has to be said that, beyond these very general indications, the only institutional provision they make can be encapsulated in a phrase: namely, '*the Party of the proletariat*'. I

²⁰ OQ, pp. 289, 290, 295. ²¹ OQT, pp. 87, 112.

²² This section of Trotsky's pamphlet is omitted from the English edition. See L. Trotsky, *Nos tâches politiques*, Paris 1970, pp. 198–202.

²³ 'The Russian Revolution', in Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York 1970, p. 390.

emphasize the article because that is how Trotsky and Luxemburg think of the matter; despite the pluralist commitment, singularly, a proletarian party as representative of the interests of the working class. It is a way of thinking and a diction that has been endemic in Marxism since its inception. It runs from Marx and Engels into intellectual habits of the present day, even ones quite free of any suspicion of a Stalinist influence. As I mean to put it in question, I had better delimit in advance the exact scope of my intention and so avoid any confusion of it with another sort of criticism. My point is not to suggest that classical Marxism entailed a monolithic view of proletarian rule, that Marx, Engels and their immediate followers embraced a conception of the transition to socialism which left no room for political opposition, difference of opinion and dissent. They did not. As we have seen, Trotsky speaks plainly to the contrary and there is no reason to regard his idea as atypical. It has been said often, and rightly, that nothing in this tradition committed its authors to the notion of the single-party state. However, neither did anything spell out the requirement of a plurality of parties and there is, accordingly, a virtual silence on the issue. It may be reasonable, in that situation, for us to construe pluralist reflections like those I have quoted from Trotsky as allowing for organizational multiplicity. But it is impossible to overlook the circumstance that the Marxists of his epoch did not themselves habitually think in terms of such multiplicity and that the overwhelming weight of what they said lay, rather, upon unity of organizational focus, identifying representation of the interests of the working class with one political party. Various considerations may be urged, historical, political and ideological, as to why this should have been so and the identification not, in context, objectionable or malign. But the locutions which it generated are associated, now, with another, repressive conceptual and political universe in which serious injury to the cause of socialism has been done. It is therefore proper that Marxists should look upon them critically, recognizing not only what produced them historically but also their theoretical limitations.

There is a familiar point in this. It has become a commonplace that amongst the several matters Marx did not speak much or in detail about must be counted the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this he was more or less followed, until 1917, by his disciples and their motives were the same as his, that is, anti-speculative ones. There is, thus, nothing especially novel about pointing out a theoretical gap where the exact modes of proletarian representation are concerned. Today, however, no-one can continue to trade on the anti-speculative impulse as a reason for not attempting to make the lacuna good. Nor should anyone accept without close scrutiny whatever classical Marxism did bequeath on the problem of political representation and, in particular, a way of thinking and talking about it in unitary terms. For, a whole historical experience casts back sharp and questioning light on to the area of doctrinal deficiency by having offered a bureaucratic and authoritarian solution to that problem. One of our questions has to be whether some old intellectual and linguistic reflexes do not disclose a conception of workers' democracy which, understandable in its own historical time, must be viewed as too constricted nevertheless.

It may be objected that no univocal idea of party should be laid at Marx and Engels's door when the corpus of their writings displays, in fact, such fluidity of usage. Only during their lifetimes, it has been noted, did the modern concept of a political party take shape and they themselves used the term in a number of different senses.²⁴ But I do not suggest that there is just one usage in their work, only that a usage of interest in the context of the present article can be argued to originate with them. Two amongst their meanings of party are relevant to the argument and they are neatly distinguished by Marx himself in a letter of 1860. Writing that after the dissolution of the Communist League in 1852 he 'did not belong any more . . . to any organization whether secret or public', he says that in that sense the party ceased to exist for him eight years previously. He goes on to add, however, that the League itself 'was only an episode in the history of the party which grows everywhere spontaneously from the soil of modern society' and he explains that, in this case, he means 'party in the great historical sense of the word.'²⁵ Let us then register these two meanings, a broad historical and a narrower organizational one. The broad can evidently encompass a plurality of particular organizations. It denotes a whole side, so to speak, in a large historical contest and the institutional embodiment of the party may here be multiplex, as well as changing over time. By contrast, in the other, narrower usage, it is rather a specific political organization that is referred to. Now I think that there are to be found, in the thought of Marx and Engels, the premises to encourage a slide between these two meanings, so that party in the narrow sense comes to stand for party in the broad and what is thus a part of the working-class movement to be taken for the whole of it.

Vanguard and Party

I shall seek to isolate them by inviting attention not, in this instance, to a personal letter but to that most public of documents, the *Communist Manifesto*. The relevant passage is a celebrated one in which the founders of historical materialism define the relationship of the Communists to the working class as a whole and, on the face of it, it goes directly against the case here being made. For, it does speak precisely of 'other working-class parties', insisting that the Communists do not form a 'separate' one, 'opposed' to them, or have interests 'separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole', or promote 'any sectarian principles of their own'; their conclusions only express 'actual relations springing from an existing class struggle'. These sentiments are part and parcel of an anti-sectarian, anti-utopian socialist outlook which Marx and Engels upheld their whole lives long. But the crux of this matter is what is said then to distinguish the Communists from the other working-class parties and that is: that, across the different national struggles, they stress 'the common interests of the entire proletariat' and, in various stages of the struggle against the

²⁴ See Monty Johnstone, 'Marx and Engels and the Concept of the Party', in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register 1967*, London, p. 122; and David McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx: An Introduction*, London 1971, p. 167.

²⁵ Marx to Freiligrath, in McLellan, pp. 173-74.

bourgeoisie, 'represent the interests of the movement as a whole'; that, consequently, they are 'the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties' and possess the theoretical advantage 'of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement'.²⁶ The Communists are distinguished by being, in a word, the vanguard.

Once again, I must try to secure my argument against possible confusion with another that is common. In itself the idea of a proletarian vanguard does not necessarily carry with it any authoritarian or substitutionist logic. When coupled with the anti-sectarian emphasis which was one with the central theses of historical materialism at the moment of its birth, this idea is subject to a permanent democratic control. Socialism is the outcome of tendencies inherent in capitalism and, in particular, of the struggles of the working class, or else it is just a dream—the scheme of 'this or that would-be universal reformer'.²⁷ What is claimed for the putative vanguard (i.e., for a section of the working class already active politically, organized and aware), the objective interest it professes to look to and the political knowledge it purports to deploy; these are not, therefore, a truth to be imposed upon the workers willy-nilly, but something they will, it is held, discover in time for themselves through their own political experience. The claim has to be vindicated politically and representation of the workers democratically won. However, in any historical circumstances, the association of a vanguard role with a single political tendency or organization is a much more dubious matter. For, it encourages two complementary assumptions each of which is highly questionable. The first is that one such current could represent, adequately and completely, the interests of the working class as a whole and not need the critical opposition of other currents to help remedy omissions, emerging rigidities of political outlook or response, plain mistakes; or could command a type of knowledge always sufficient to its tasks. The second is that a vanguard need not be politically diverse, its functions shared, as it were, amongst a number of tendencies, all aiming to speak or even speaking for proletarian interests but divided along other lines; and relating to one another in a variety of ways, possibly as separate sections of one party, possibly as different parties in a united front, now as parts of a governing revolutionary coalition, now as competitors within the democratic structures of a proletarian state.

I have no wish to visit these assumptions on Marx and Engels, as in this form for sure they did not hold them. It must, nevertheless be said that the claim made for the Communists in the *Manifesto*, for all its genuine modesty on one level, is a large one indeed and prone to be reproduced decked out with the two assumptions in question. From Marx and the Communist League to the present day, what single individual, political tendency or organization has understood, clearly, 'the line of march' and 'the conditions' and 'the ultimate general results' of the proletarian

²⁶ 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, London 1975-, Vol. 6, pp. 497-98.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

movement? Even the greatest respect for the historical contribution in this regard of Marx and Engels themselves, of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in his lifetime, of Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky, cannot disguise that it is an implausible claim, and this for the sort of reasons we have seen stated here by the last-named pair, but which were stated also before them, in a different political idiom though no less eloquently or compellingly for being so, by John Stuart Mill.

Unfettering Socialist Democracy

Let us return now to Luxemburg and Trotsky and see how things stand with what both think of, and Trotsky repeatedly refers to, as 'the Party of the proletariat'.²⁸ As one would expect, there are statements which define the character of social democracy in terms that can be traced back to such passages from Marx and Engels as have been quoted above. According to Luxemburg, social democracy 'is called upon to represent . . . the totality of the interests of the proletariat as a class'; again, it 'is the representative of the class interests of the proletariat'. Its 'truth', says Trotsky echoing the *Manifesto*, is 'merely the theoretical expression of the broadening and deepening class struggle of the proletariat'.²⁹ But the equation of part with whole, social democracy with the workers' movement, is now a much clearer presence. Thus, in response to a notorious assertion from Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Luxemburg argues that 'Social Democracy is not bound up with the organization of the working classes; rather it is the very movement of the working class'.³⁰ Trotsky makes this same identification a matter of definition. Alluding to a formulation from the manifesto adopted by the First Congress of the Russian Party, he writes, 'It could not be better put. Social Democracy "*consciously wants to be and to remain*" the class movement of the proletariat . . . both yesterday and today, Social Democracy consciously wanted and still wants "*to be and to remain*" the class party of the proletariat, that is, to be itself: Social Democracy.'³¹

We must keep in mind here the broad, historical meaning of party since it is probable that something of it still attaches to these ways of talking about social democracy. It is clear in any event from their context that neither Luxemburg nor Trotsky mean by them to press for any rigid exclusivism, to confine the movement narrowly to one homogeneous political current. The very opposite is the case, and what they say construable in the generous sense: social democracy is large enough to embrace a political diversity. Still, even if it is true that they continue in some measure to think of the party of the proletariat in the 'great historical' meaning, the fact remains that it also has for them another connotation and this is the narrower, organizational one. For, they treat social democracy as a unitary political structure and defend the principle of centralism which makes it so.

²⁸ OPR, pp. 7, 61, 123. ²⁹ OQ, pp. 287, 303; OPR, p. 123.

³⁰ OQ, p. 290. Lenin's assertion: 'A Jacobin who wholly identifies himself with the organization of the proletariat—a proletariat conscious of its class interests—is a revolutionary Social-Democrat.' See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow 1960-1970, Vol. 7, p. 383.

³¹ OPR, p. 8.

Whatever their other differences with Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky do not contest this issue. She sees the 'strong tendency toward centralism' in social democracy as following from the centralizing processes of capitalism and the bourgeois state, he argues that 'organizational centralism is a powerful weapon of the class struggle of the proletariat'. She speaks in this connection of 'a unitary, compact labour party', he speaks likewise of 'a single fighting Party organization'.³² When all is said and done, therefore, representation of proletarian interests has come to be associated with one political organization and a party in the narrow sense to 'usurp' the title of the broad, 'historical' party of the working class.

A sense of historical proportion and political realism will be in order finally. There are, first, straightforward empirical circumstances to explain in part the singularity of reference in these usages of party. Where, as in Russia, there was not yet a socialist organization commanding the allegiance of masses of the working class, it was quite natural to talk of creating one, a proletarian party; or where, as in Germany, there was such an organization but only one, to talk of *the* proletarian party. Secondly, the conception of a unitary party in itself expressed no aversion to socialist pluralism or diversity, only an aspiration towards the maximum unification and coordination of proletarian forces in face of the centralism of the modern bourgeois state. However, two things need to be said in this regard. One is that, while this principle of coordination is perfectly valid for any effective revolutionary strategy against the centralized political instruments of the bourgeoisie, it is not at all clear that its universal form must be a single socialist party rather than an alliance of such parties. The conception of one party should not be allowed to become so ideologically regulative as to exclude this latter possibility and, hence, the idea of a multiplex proletarian vanguard, a political representation channelled through more than one working-class organization. The other thing is that socialists need always to take care not to set up as a hard pattern of thought what is prompted by some present reality, for as often as not this will reflect an historical limit. So it was with 'the party of the proletariat'. In most countries it described an historical experience. But to generalize or make normative a conception in which representation of proletarian interests is the business of one political organization is to put an artificial and potentially dangerous limit on the scope of socialist democracy. Factions within one party are potential parties; tendencies, potential factions; inchoate groupings, potential tendencies—by a well-known logic the limits can begin to narrow. If its claims to go beyond bourgeois democracy are good, the norms of socialist democracy must allow, in unambiguous terms, for organizational pluralism. Under capitalism, this means that no socialist tendency should pretend to any political monopoly. When the bourgeois state is overthrown, it means that there must be room for any organization that will respect a properly constituted democratic and socialist legality.

³² *op. p.* 287, and see also pp. 285–86; *op. p.* 105; *Report of the Siberian Delegation*, p. 38.

Biology and the Crisis of the Human Sciences

Dominique Lecourt

The starting point of all radical reflection upon epistemology must be the recognition that in matters of philosophy we are still living in the 1930s.* When I say 'we', I naturally mean, first of all, 'we' philosophers. It is impossible to ignore the fact that the fundamental problematics that continue to govern our thinking were established more than half a century ago and in their essentials have scarcely experienced any modification since then. At that time, various schools concurrently established themselves on the ruins of neo-Kantianism: *logical positivism*, centering on the Vienna Circle, the philosophy which, despite its current crisis, is still paramount in the Anglo-Saxon world and even belatedly gaining a foothold in France; *phenomenology* with its two contrasting faces, the transcendental logic of Husserl and the ontology of Heidegger; the *critical social theory* of Hegelian-Marxist provenance, of which Lukács was the first representative before the Frankfurt School became its bastion; and, finally, *dialectical materialism* in its Soviet form, the birth of which can be precisely dated in 1931. Despite the intricate lineages to be found in each of these schools, and despite the variations on their main themes introduced by this or that particular philosopher, the stability of the international philosophical landscape is striking—it is almost as if philosophy had suddenly been stopped in its tracks and petrified.

Outside of philosophy proper, a similar ossification of positions also occurred in the so-called human sciences. Thus it was in the 1930s that the official battlelines were formally drawn between 'behaviorism' and 'mentalism' in psychology; while in political economy it was the moment of the fateful division between Keynesianism (Keynes, an intimate friend of Wittgenstein, wrote his *General Theory* in 1935) and neo-liberalism (F. A. von Hayek, Popper's mentor, published *Prices and Production* in 1931). Meanwhile the claims of functionalism in sociology were being established by Talcott Parsons (whose masterwork, *The Structure of Social Action*, appeared in 1937) and given further

* This text is based on a talk given before the Centre d'Histoire et de Epistémologie des théories scientifiques et des systèmes philosophiques, Université de Picardie, 29 April 1980.

epistemological support by logical positivism in the person of Neurath. Finally, the 'Bloomfield epoch' in linguistics began to flower in the 1930s (Bloomfield's seminal textbook, *Language*, was published in 1933), orienting research to a formalist path which culminated in the work of the Danish linguist Hjelmslev. It seems clear, then, that a central priority in our investigations must be to explore the still enigmatic nature of the link between the situation of stagnation affecting philosophy and the no less striking stability of the theoretical tendencies that divide and govern the field of the contemporary human sciences.

The Allure of Sociobiology

Now in the last four or five years a new discipline with bold scientific pretensions has claimed to discover a solution to these two interlinked crises. This formerly unknown discipline calls itself 'sociobiology' and its founder or 'discoverer' is Edward O. Wilson. His manifesto, *On Human Nature* (1978), has given rise to some very lively political controversies in the United States, particularly because of allegations that it contains a barely veiled apology for racism. Without directly entering this debate, I simply want to stress the vast objectives of Wilson's work and to investigate the theoretical tools which he employs. Part of the spell which has been recently cast by sociobiology has to do with its unconcealed ambition to provide an explicit, unifying foundation for the various social sciences. In Wilson's view, biology becomes the common ground for the scientific reconciliation of the competing problematics of psychology, sociology and economics: 'Progress over a large part of biology has been fueled by competition among the various perspectives and techniques derived from cell biology and biochemistry, the discipline and the anti-discipline. . . . I suggest that we are about to repeat this cycle in the blending of biology and the social sciences and that as a consequence the two cultures of Western intellectual life will be joined at last. Biology has traditionally affected the social sciences only indirectly through technological manifestations, such as the benefits of medicine, the mixed blessings of gene splicing and other techniques of genetics, and the specter of population growth. Although of great practical importance, these matters are trivial with reference to the conceptual foundation of the social sciences. The conventional treatments of 'social biology' and 'social issues of biology' in our colleges and universities present some formidable intellectual challenges, but they are not addressed to the core of social theory. This core is the deep structure of human nature, an essentially biological phenomenon that is also the primary focus of the humanities.' (p. 38)

In fact the biological basis of Wilson's enterprise is a kind of schematic neo-Darwinism which gives central place to the notion of 'natural fitness' as a property attributed to the gene. This Darwinian fitness is measured by the relative frequency of a specific gene in the population over the course of successive generations. Conversely the increased Darwinian fitness of a given gene enhances its ability to reproduce itself within the population. According to Wilson, therefore, the individual exists only as a vehicle for the transmission of its

genes and as a support in their process of multiplication. From this standpoint, evolution is rather like a stock-exchange transaction, the sole object of which is the eventual realization of (genetic) dividends. Hence the idea that in each generation the victorious genes separate and reassemble to construct new organisms that on the average contain a higher proportion of the more successful genes. The ultimate result, therefore, is the survival and consolidation of a genetic elite.

I leave it to the biologists to arbitrate the merits of this theory, which evidently rests on a literal and modernized transposition of the old Weismannian conception of the continuity of the germ plasm. As it happens, a number of eminent biologists have recently rejected the central notion of Darwinian fitness or denounced the vulgar evolutionism implicit in sociobiology's intemperate finalism.¹ In addition, I should add that Wilson never explains or defines the notion of 'behaviour,' but paradoxically seems to borrow it uncritically from the very behaviourist tradition which he is determined to combat. My concern, however, is not to disprove this questionable theory, but rather to attempt to explain what gives it a peculiar ideological force. This force is drawn from the 'marriage' it seeks to promote between two other disciplines that are both well established and quite respectable: genetics (especially population genetics) and, above all, *ethology*. A careful scrutiny of the writings of sociobiology reveals, that while genetics is the most emphasized partner in this marriage, it is really ethology which provides the most substantial dowry. To be more precise, what the supposed 'data' of genetics are charged with guaranteeing are really conclusions drawn from studies in ethology. From an immediate epistemological standpoint, the key question is to determine the status of these putative 'conclusions'. We can impolitely ask whether the scandal provoked by sociobiology does not actually derive from its attempt to provide scientific clothing to the *philosophical fantasy* that is concealed at the heart of ethology—a fantasy that ethology has previously refrained from making explicit, prudently letting it appear only in its conclusions, and in the guise of hypotheses.

We must, therefore, direct our attention to ethology, not for its own intrinsic interest, but because of its strategic position in clarifying the ideological questions raised initially by the popularity of sociobiology. At the same time, by a further regression from ethology proper to its roots in the problematic of contemporary biology as a whole, we may also begin to untie the gordian knot that connects biology and the human sciences by the intermediary of certain philosophical positions.

From Darwin to Lorenz

In 1973 the Nobel Prize for medicine and physiology was jointly awarded to Karl von Frisch, Konrad Lorenz and Niko Tinbergen. Even if it is Lorenz who has become the most prominent of this trio, it can be fairly said that the winners of the award were the three founding fathers of ethology as an independent discipline. The historical

¹ Cf. R. C. Levontin, *The Genetic Basis of the Evolutionary Process*, New York 1974; and Paul O. Hopkins, *La recherche en éthologie*, Paris 1968.

service of these researchers (whose parallel investigations, significantly, started in the 1930s)—and of Lorenz in particular—was to have rehabilitated the study of animal behaviour in the natural environment as opposed to the laboratory where it had become confined by both behaviourism and Pavlovian reflexology. The explicit aim of the ethologists was to develop the comparative study of animal behaviour. The implementation of this programme has produced an immense accumulation of research which has tended to reinstate the centrality of the notion of the *innate*: according to Lorenz, there exists in every living organism certain phylogenetic adaptations that determine behaviour. Besides the innate knowledge (instinct) common to a whole species, or even several species, it is possible to observe a repertoire of responses that are set in motion by 'releasing mechanisms'. In successive studies Lorenz has examined the innate 'releases' of congener, mate, child, parent, etc.

Without underestimating the novelty of the pioneering works of the ethologists, it is necessary to recall the epistemological condition of their possibility. This condition was provided by the work of Darwin; not so much by *The Origin of the Species* (1859), however, as by his later works, *The Descent of Man* (1871) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animal* (1872). As George Canguilhem has stressed,² these texts occupy a seemingly paradoxical position in relation to the work that they made possible. On the one hand, they created the basis for a new conception of the relationship between the human and the animal, overthrowing in Copernican fashion the ancient hegemony of anthropocentrism. With Darwin, in fact, humanity is no longer taken as the only living form capable of integral development and, hence, as the sole measure of the respective development of other forms. Man becomes the result of a 'descent' rather than the pinnacle of an 'ascent'. He is the culmination of animal heredity instead of a natural hierarchy. Darwin advances the revolutionary idea, in opposition to the exponents of *Naturphilosophie*, that the analogies between humans and animals are not symbolic correspondences between parts and wholes, but in fact etiological connections.

On the other hand, however, these works of Darwin do not break with *anthropomorphism*, which Canguilhem correctly observes is more difficult to jettison than is anthropocentrism. It is quite striking, in fact, how much Darwin's animal psychology in all essentials resembles the psychology that prevailed since Greek antiquity, from the Stoics to Rorarius. There is also a remarkable analogy between the anecdotes which Darwin relates in his *Descent of Man* and certain passages in the *Apologie de Raymond Sebon*. Darwin, like Montaigne, attributes to animals language, industry, tricks, a sense of beauty and the capacity to reason. Canguilhem, quoting Bytendijk and Hediger, ascribes Darwin's 'naivety' to a kind of resistance to the implications of his own position in zoology, and maintains that both animal psychology and scientific ethology (he mentions Lorenz) were only born when this anthropomorphism was abandoned.³ The seeming paradox,

² George Canguilhem, *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences*, Paris 1968.

³ Canguilhem, 'Du développement à l'évolution,' *Revue Théor.*, Paris 1960.

therefore, is that the ethology that Darwinism made possible by his break with anthropocentrism was, in turn, only established by a further break with his enduring anthropomorphism.

But what is the significance of ethology's purportedly more radical rupture with classical definitions of humanity and animality? Or more precisely, what exactly has been gained by substituting a 'zoomorphism' for the former 'anthropomorphism'? Particularly if by zoomorphism we are to understand, as Canguilhem adds, 'this way of considering the animal as the "subject" of its experience, and placing oneself in its position.'⁴ Canguilhem is careful to insert apostrophes, but this does not prevent him from pronouncing the essential word that denotes what is in every sense the key to the constitution of contemporary ethology. To attempt a summary formulation: the *subject-form*—through which ideological practice effects the interpellation of each individual as a 'subject' (Althusser⁵)—is in ethology dressed up as something allegedly original in animal nature. The fact that the modalities of this inscription of subjectivity have been modified since Darwin, and that his naive 'anthropomorphism' has been replaced by a 'zoomorphism' (or more generically, by 'ideomorphism'), in no way changes the epistemological problem—even if the shift from Darwin⁶ has actually opened up a new field of research.

The works of Lorenz, his properly scientific studies as well as his highly successful popularizations, dramatically confirm the continuity of this underlying naturalization of the subject-form. From this standpoint, the actual political positions of Lorenz or any other ethologist are not immediately relevant. The salient point is that the individual is by nature a 'subject': this is the overarching theme of ethology. Moreover, it is an ideological theme *par excellence*, since by giving its result as its origin, it carries out the process of the 'subjectification' (which remains ineluctable) of the individual to ideological practice in its various forms. This discourse owes its powers of fascination to its own structures: through the ability to depict self-evident facts ('this is how it is'), it provides us with the spectacle of the achieved process as if this were its own explanation.

Ethology and Natural Right

This naturalization of the subject-form, then, is the philosophical fantasy which is concealed within ethology, and which has been passed on to sociobiology. Sociobiology's claim to have accomplished a fundamental unification of the human sciences on a biological foundation can only be, in our opinion, a mere repetition and displacement (towards the individual gene) of the hallucinatory subjectification which is constitutive of all ideological practice. Furthermore, by merely scanning the titles of works published under the banner of sociobiology—*On Human Nature* (Wilson), *Social Contract* (Ardrey), and so on—one might be tempted to see an uncanny resurgence in scientific guise of

⁴ Ibid, p. 69.

⁵ See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' in *Lenin and Philosophy*, NLB, London 1971.

the hoary themes of natural right and social contract. In my view, however, such a reduction would be too simplistic, because the apparent convergence between ethology and the familiar juridical problematic which is the hallmark of modern contract theories is purely an illusion. But to further exploit the powers of paradox, it is a peculiarly fecund illusion which permits us to shed an unexpected light upon the profound torsion presently taking place in the meta-physical foundations of a spectrum of disciplines which, as we noted in the beginning, were philosophically 'petrified' in the 1930s.

That there is an illusion is clearly shown if we consider that the 'animal societies' which form the subject matter of modern ethology in no way represent a 'state of nature' in the sense understood by Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau, i.e. a kind of degree zero of society as a basis from which to explain its constitution. On the contrary, they are seen as real societies which prefigure human society in all of its attributes. To put it another way, the vocabulary which ethology employs directs us away from the contractarian epistemology of the Enlightenment, and back toward classical 'Natural Right' of ancient and mediaeval philosophy. I would propose the hypothesis that this kind of historical regression in theory can be explained by the practical regression of juridical ideology in the ideological formation of our time. The ideological form that became the dominant form of the dominant ideology with the rise of the bourgeoisie to power is today giving way to a different form.

The Fundamental Structure of Ideology

To determine what this new, core ideological form might be, it is necessary to take quite seriously the insistent remarks of the sociobiologists when they promise a 'perfect control' of social phenomena. This ideology of control, of course, has a name, *technocratism*, and it has provided the primary impulse for the behaviourist/functionalist wave that has dominated the human sciences since the 1930s. The objection may be made that this ideology is not readily compatible with an apology for the 'subject'. This is undoubtedly true. But it should be noted that, on the one hand, the conjuncture has shifted in such a way that it no longer makes the extreme forms of this ideology viable; while, on the other hand, this ideology has been under attack from a new quarter. Despite the effects of vain formalism and a creeping intellectual sclerosis, structuralism challenged technocratism by radically denying the constitutive role of any subject whatsoever. By reinvigorating both historical materialism and psychoanalysis it helped establish an alternative pole to the epistemological coordinates established in the 1930s. The current biologicistic offensive, in the forms of ethology and sociobiology, would then correspond to a return in force of the notion of the 'subject' in an attempt to cover the weak philosophical flanks exposed by behaviourism and functionalism. But this recuperation of the 'subject', as we have seen, does not involve a simple return to the juridical forms of the 'subject' of Natural Right with all the subversive effects that its underlying theoretical apparatus can produce. What, in contrast, appears to be happening is the birth of a new compromise formation that was previously unknown: a

technocratic neo-liberal ideology. This political requirement would explain the prominence of neuro-physiology and ethology in biological philosophy to the detriment of molecular biology whose heyday passed in the 1960s.

To conclude, then, at least provisionally. If it is true that this metaphysic of the subject is the silent substratum of those forms of humanism that have so far existed (and also of the 'inhumanisms' that correspond to it), and if the above analysis is correct, then we can say that the present ascendancy of ethologistic ideology represents a new attempt of this humanism to safeguard its foundations. Ethology and sociobiology merely renew the identification between the individual (whether man, species or gene) and the subject which is the fundamental structure of all ideology. Rather than resolving the crisis of the human sciences—reunifying them on a new foundation—they merely transpose the central contradiction to a new location.

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THE TRAVAIL OF LABOURISM

G. A. Cohen **Freedom, Justice and Capitalism**

Michael Rustin **Labour's Constitutional Crisis**

Francis Mulhern **Debray on Intellectuals**

Ahmet Samim **The Ordeal of the Turkish Left**

Michèle Barrett **Materialist Aesthetics**

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|--|
| 1 | | Themes |
| 3 | <i>G. A. Cohen</i> | Freedom, Justice and Capitalism |
| 17 | <i>Michael Rustin</i> | Different Conceptions of Party: Labour's Constitutional Debates |
| 43 | <i>Francis Mulhern</i> | 'Teachers, Writers, Celebrities': intelligentsias and their histories |
| 60 | <i>Abmet Samim</i> | The Tragedy of the Turkish Left |
| 86 | <i>Michelle Barrett</i> | REVIEW Materialist Aesthetics |
| 94 | <i>Nicolas Walter</i> | COMMUNICATION Secularism and British Marxism |

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We publish Ahmet Samim's vivid personal account of the recent history of the Left in Turkey at a time when the military government in that country is increasingly directing the weight of its repression against the workers' movement. Vigilant opposition to the executioners and torturers who guard NATO's southern flank is demanded as an act of solidarity with the Turkish Left. Ahmet Samim's article is a contribution to the searching re-appraisal of past strategies now being undertaken by one of the largest revolutionary movements to have emerged in recent times. He suggests that in the course of the 1970s the impressive militancy, and formidable organization, of the Turkish far left and 'revolutionary' trade unions was too often squandered on militarist adventures, and consumed by internecine rivalry, at a time when the Turkish fascist movement was acquiring a popular character and was infiltrating deeply into the apparatuses of the state, under the benevolent patronage of the counter-revolutionary Justice Party. The social democrats of Ecevit's Republican People's Party proved no more capable of stemming the advances of the Right. Samim argues that the strategies of the various Left formations, however different in other respects, were prone to rely on deliverance at the hands of radical groups of army officers and too little concerned with enhancing the autonomous power of the workers' movement and its potential allies. Despite the special features of the Turkish state and social formation, to which Samim draws attention, his eloquent critique makes many points of relevance to other anti-capitalist movements, as well as drawing attention to the courage and dedication of so many whose fundamental rights are now being trampled upon.

In Britain the workers' movement has only at rare moments been aware of revolutionary alternatives to the narrow routines of parliamentarism and reformism. Nevertheless it has displayed a tenacious adherence, through the trade unions and Labour Party, to a unitary and corporate class identity. This traditional pattern of British politics has now been challenged by the rightwing breakaway group, the Council for Social Democracy. The occasion for this split by a sector of the Labour Right has been the protracted conflict over the Party's constitution, rooted in differing conceptions of the functions and purposes of political organization. Michael Rustin examines the underlying assumptions of the chief protagonists in Labour's constitutional debate and measures them against the forms of socialist and working class organization most likely to develop the political capacity of the labour movement. Drawing upon

the findings of political sociology and the controversies associated with 'Euro-communism' and the experience of cadre-based politics, he assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the opposed models of party organization at issue. While generally supportive of the initiatives of the Left he insists that consolidation of the gains it has made will require a more ambitious and wide-ranging regeneration of socialist politics, in the workplaces, in local communities, and in the Left's programmes and campaigns.

Over the last decade the Left in Europe, pre-occupied largely by debates over strategy, has tended to neglect the task of deepening and furthering its critique of capitalism as a model of civilization. The women's movement has begun to introduce a new and crucial dimension of this critique but, quite properly, its most direct target is not capitalist private property as such. Meanwhile open apologetics for capitalism have revived and, following the electoral victories of Thatcher and Reagan, now enjoy palpable political influence. In this year's Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, which we publish in this issue, G. A. Cohen argues that 'neo-liberalism' must be taken seriously by socialists and suggests that the arguments required to refute it demonstrate the essential role played by concepts of justice and freedom in the critique of private property in the means of production.

The social role of intellectuals has been little investigated by Marxists since Gramsci's pioneering but often enigmatic notes. Régis Debray's new book, 'Teachers, Writers, Celebrities', advances a series of bold theses on the dynamics of intellectual practice in its relation to the changing configurations of the cultural and political apparatuses. In particular, Debray exposes the penetration of French intellectual life by fashion and commercial hype, under the impetus of late-capitalist marketing systems and media organization. Introducing the forthcoming Verso edition of the book, Francis Mulhern situates Debray's analysis in the French tradition of reflection on intellectuals, and sketches a comparative account of the intelligentsias of France, Britain and the USA.

Marxist discussion of aesthetics has had a tendency to focus on problems of cultural production and to be less concerned with those of cultural 'consumption'. Michèle Barrett reviews two recent studies which seek to remedy this defect and to make possible a more adequate account of the meaning of artistic practice and of aesthetic pleasure.

Freedom, Justice and Capitalism

Before I first went to university I had a belief, which I still have, and which is probably shared by the great majority of you.* I mean the belief that the way to decide whether a given economic period is good or bad economically is by considering the welfare of people in general at the relevant time. If people are on the whole well off, then on the whole the times are good, and if they are not, then the times are bad. Because I had this belief before I got to university, I was surprised by something I heard in one of the first lectures I attended, which was given by the late Frank Cyril James, who, as it happens, obtained his Bachelor of Commerce degree here at the London School of Economics in 1923. When I heard him he was Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University, where, in addition to occupying the Principalship, he gave lectures every year on the economic history of the world, from its semiscrutable beginnings up to whatever year he was lecturing in. In my case the year was 1958, and in the lecture I want to tell you about James was describing a segment of modern history, some particular quarter-century or so: I am sorry to say I cannot

remember which one. But I do remember something of what he said about it. 'These', he said, referring to the years in question, 'were excellent times economically. Prices were high, wages were low ...' And he went on, but I did not hear the rest of his sentence.

I did not hear it because I was busy wondering whether he had meant what he said, or, perhaps, had put the words 'high' and 'low' in the wrong places. For though I had not studied economics, I was convinced that high prices and low wages made for hard times, not good ones. In due course I came to the conclusion that James was too careful to have transposed the two words. It followed that he meant what he said. And it also followed that what he meant when he said that times were good was that they were good for the employing classes, for the folk he was revealing himself to be a spokesman of, since when wages are low and prices are high you can make a lot of money out of wage workers. Such candour about the properly purely instrumental position of the mass of humankind was common in nineteenth century economic writing, and James was a throwback to, or a holdover from, that age. For reasons to be stated in a moment, frank discourse of the Cyril James sort is now pretty rare, at any rate in public. It is discourse which, rather shockingly, treats human labour the way the capitalist system treats it in reality: as a resource for the enhancement of the wealth and power of those who do not have to labour, because they have so ~~much~~ wealth and power.

Last year's speaker in this series (Rudolf Bahro) is justly celebrated for his contribution to the understanding of actually existing socialism. My own theme this evening is actually existing capitalism, and I want to start with the capitalism of the United Kingdom. This capitalism is currently managed by a Conservative government which is engaged in a sustained attack on the living standards, and on the democratic powers, of two huge and overlapping groups of the population: working class people and poor people. It is a government dedicated to the defence of private property, and to the restoration, as far as is thought politically possible, of property rights which Tories think have been eroded by decades of socialistic drift. Like all very large human projects, present Conservative policy is variously inspired. It is, in part, motivated by the structural requirements of contemporary British capitalism. But it also satisfies, or is at least intended to satisfy, *revanchiste* aspirations rife among the middle and upper classes, many of whom feel that it is wrong for humbly situated people to be as comfortable and as powerful as they are thought now to be. It is wrong for a person who is only an industrial worker, or, worse, unemployed, and therefore not contributing to the national wealth, to pay low rent for commodious living accommodation, and to be freed of anxiety in respect of the education and health of his or her children. Members of the working class, and those below them, some of whom are not even white, expect too much and get too much, and have too much say in the workplace and elsewhere, to the detriment of the income and the authority of their

* This is the text of the 1980 Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, given on 24 November at the London School of Economics. I am grateful to Tamara Deutscher for generous assistance and to my colleague Arnold Zuboff for his invaluable moral and intellectual support.

class superiors. There is, as a result, in many Tory hearts, a deep desire for what Tony Benn has called a fundamental shift of wealth and power in favour of rich people and their families.

Now that desire is not the official justification of present government policy, partly because, as Cyril James may not have realised, we live in a democratic age, and policy must be defended before people in general, not just people of privilege; and partly too, because human beings are so constituted that they need to believe, at least from time to time, that what they are doing is morally right. The disposition to generate ideology, and the disposition to consume it, are fundamental traits of human nature. As Isaac Deutscher said, in his book *The Unfinished Revolution*: 'Statesmen, leaders and ordinary people alike need to have the subjective feeling that what they stand for is morally right'. Members of ruling classes need to feel that their rule is morally justified, and members of ruled classes need to feel that their acquiescence is morally appropriate. That is why ideology plays such an important part in history, for otherwise encounters between classes would always be settled by brute force. And it was a feature of Isaac Deutscher's magnificent historical work that, while he was a materialist in the best Marxist sense, he was also a master at portraying the ideological atmosphere in which people breathe and think and live, in which, as Marx said, they become sensible of the structural conflicts between them, and fight them out. I did not know Isaac Deutscher personally, but he entered my life with some force on two occasions. The first was when I was studying Soviet history and politics at McGill University. His book on *Stalin* was required reading, and many of us were excited by the contrast between it and the merely academic treatments of Soviet history we also had to read. Isaac Deutscher showed us that scrupulous scholarship was compatible with political engagement. The first and only time I saw him was in June of 1965, when he spoke at a teach-in on the Vietnam War at University College London. He did not speak about the war alone, but located it within a much wider pattern of events, and when he finished I felt, as I am sure many others did, that I had, at least for the moment, a deeper understanding of the nature of the world I lived in.

Arguments for Capitalism

The general need for ideology and the particular demands of a democratic age produce, when combined, a great body of justifying belief, which genuinely animates Conservative theory and practice. Whatever may be its ultimate and secret connection with more visceral springs of action, and with structural requirements of contemporary capitalism, there is a sincere conviction that the protection of private property, particularly in its larger agglomerations, is a good thing, not because it benefits some and harms others, but for reasons which one need not be ashamed to state. Three such reasons are salient in the ideological discourse of members of the government and their supporters. The regime of private property is defended on the grounds that it enlivens production, safeguards freedom and conforms to principles of justice. We can call these the *economic* argument, the *freedom* argument and the *justice* argument.

The economic argument is that the capitalist market, in which, by definition, private property reigns supreme, has good economic consequences. It is splendidly productive, to the advantage of everyone. Even the poor in a market economy are less poor than the poor in other kinds of economy. The idea of incentives appears here. To interfere with the natural tendency for high rewards to accrue to those who enjoy wealth and high positions is to dampen their creativity as investors, entrepreneurs, and managers, to the general disadvantage. To practise policies of steeply progressive taxation, death duties and the like, is to forgo the golden eggs the harried rich would otherwise lay. Widen the gap between rich and poor and both the rich and the poor will be richer than they otherwise would be. But secondly, and distinctly, any deviation from the free market, apart from having the stated adverse effect on welfare, is a transgression against freedom. Economic freedom has good economic consequences, but it is also a good thing apart from its consequences, since freedom is a good thing, and economic freedom is a form of freedom. And then there is the argument of justice. In the second week of the 1979 general election campaign Margaret Thatcher said that it was necessary to re-establish capitalism not only for economic reasons but also for moral ones. Private property, after all, belongs to those who own it. It is, consequently, a kind of theft to tax it on behalf of those who do not own it, which is why Ronald Reagan has reported that he can think of no moral justification for the progressive income tax (no matter how hard he tries). If this is *mine*, what right has anyone, even the state, to take part of it away from me? And if this is mine, what right has the state, through regulations and directives, to tell me what to do with it? The regime of fully free enterprise is good because it produces welfare and protects freedom. And it is also the form of economy demanded by principles of justice.

There is not time this evening to discuss all three arguments, and I shall say nothing about the economic one. The freedom argument I shall treat in some detail. And while I shall not be able to give the same attention to the justice argument itself, I shall spend a little time trying to satisfy you that the question whether or not capitalism is a just society is a very important one. To many that will seem obviously true, but there is a strong tendency on the Left to depreciate the idea of justice, and I want to combat that tendency in this lecture.

Ideology and Philosophy

In the course of my critique of ruling ideology I engage in philosophy, of the analytical kind. That is to say: I risk being pedantic in the interest of not overlooking a pertinent distinction, I try to clarify what we mean when we say or do not say this or that, and I am always on the lookout for specifically conceptual confusion. But an objection might be raised against the notion that analytical philosophy is an appropriate instrument to use in a critique of ideology. It might be said that its delicate techniques are irrelevant to the understanding and exposure of ruling class doctrine, since that has its source in class interest, not conceptual error. But the claim that the source of ideological illusion is class interest rather than conceptual error rests upon

a false contrast. For the truth is that class interest generates ideology precisely by instilling a propensity to errors of reasoning about ideologically sensitive issues. Class interest could not in fact be the immediate source of the ideological illusions from which even reflective thinking suffers, for an illusion will not gain a grip on a reflective mind in the absence of some form of intellectual malfunctioning. And a common malfunction in the case of ideology is conceptual confusion. It is a striking feature of ideological disagreement that, in typical cases, not only does each side believe true what the other side believes false, but each side believes *obviously* true what the other side believes *obviously* false. It is likely, then, that (at least) one side is not just mistaken, but profoundly mistaken. Yet the mistake persists, and what makes it possible for it to endure is, I maintain, its conceptually complex substructure. Class interest, and not conceptual complexity, is the motivating principle of ideology, but conceptual complexity helps to explain why class interest is able to have the effect it does.

Consider, for example, the conflicting answers persons of different political persuasions will give to the question whether or not capitalism promotes freedom. For some it *evidently* does, and for others it *evidently* does not, and the dispute can take this extreme form, with honest advocacy on both sides, only because the concept of freedom lends itself, because of its complexity, to various kinds of misconstrual. And since philosophy of the analytical kind is particularly good at correcting misconstrual, at clarifying the structure of concepts we possess but are disposed to mishandle, it follows that it can be a potent solvent of at least some ideological illusions. It can be used to expose conceptual misapprehensions which strengthen the *status quo*, since one thing which helps to consolidate the ruling order is confused belief about its nature and value, in the minds of members of *all* social classes, and also in the minds of those who have dedicated themselves against the ruling order.

Capitalism and Freedom

I turn now to the freedom argument. I think socialists should, and can, meet the freedom argument on its own ground, and I regret that it is their tendency not to do so. When partisans of capitalism describe interventions against private property as invasions of freedom, there are two needlessly ineffective responses which socialists often make. The first is made by mild and Marxist socialists alike. It is: what price unrestricted freedom, when its consequence is poverty and insecurity for so many? The second response, which is peculiar to more revolutionary socialists, runs as follows: the freedom dear to the supporter of capitalism is merely bourgeois freedom. Socialism will abolish bourgeois freedom but it will provide freedom of a better and higher kind.

These responses are ineffective because it is not hard for the opponent to rebut or circumvent them. He can say, in reply to the first response, that poverty and insecurity are indeed bad, but that freedom is too important a value to sacrifice for the sake of their elimination. And since socialists, like everybody else, lack arguments which demon-

strate what the real relative importance of various values is, there is little they can do to reinforce their objection at this point. As to the second objection, which describes freedom under capitalism as *merely bourgeois* freedom, here the advocate of capitalism can reply that he prefers freedom of the known variety to an unexemplified and unexplained rival. Most people will agree with him. And if the socialist protests that the freedom is exemplified, that it already exists in countries which call themselves socialist, then few who were not on his side at the outset will think that he has improved his case by this gesture in the direction of reality.

If, however, as I would recommend, the socialist argues that capitalism is, all things considered, inimical to freedom in the very sense of 'freedom' in which, as he should concede, a person's freedom is diminished when his private property is tampered with, then he offers a challenge which the advocate of capitalism, by virtue of his own commitment, cannot ignore.

In the following remarks I do not try to show that socialism offers more freedom than capitalism. Instead, more modestly, I prove that a widespread belief that capitalism *must* offer more rests on a series of conceptual confusions.

Libertarianism and Property

Two sets of thinkers agree that unfettered capitalism maximizes freedom: so-called libertarians, who, in addition, *favor* unfettered capitalism, and some (not all) liberals, who, sharing the libertarian belief in the identity of capitalism and freedom, part company with them on policy, since they hold that other values, such as equality, and welfare, justify restrictions on freedom, and they accuse libertarians of wrongly sacrificing too much of those other good things in too total pursuit of the one good of freedom. They agree with libertarians that pure capitalism is freedom pure and simple, or at any rate economic freedom pure and simple, but they think that economic freedom may rightly and reasonably be abridged. They believe that freedom must be balanced against other values, and that what is known as the welfare state mixed economy achieves the right compromise.

I shall argue that libertarians, and liberals of the kind described, misuse the concept of freedom. They see the freedom which is intrinsic to capitalism, but they do not give proper notice to the constraint which necessarily accompanies it.

To expose this failure of perception, I shall criticize a definition of the libertarian position provided by one of their number, the philosopher Antony Flew, in his *Fontana Dictionary of Philosophy*.¹ It is there said to be 'wholehearted political and economic liberalism, opposed to any social and legal constraints on individual freedom'. Liberals of the kind just described would avow themselves unwholehearted in the

¹ London 1979, p.188.

sense of this definition, since they say that they support certain constraints on individual freedom.

Now a society in which there are *no* 'social and legal constraints on individual freedom' is perhaps imaginable, at any rate by people who have highly anarchic imaginations. But, be that as it may, the Flew definition misdescribes libertarians, since it does not apply to defenders of capitalism, which is what libertarians profess to be, and are. For consider: If the state prevents me from doing something I want to do, it evidently places a constraint on my freedom. Suppose, then, that I want to perform an action which involves a legally prohibited use of your property. I want, let us say, to pitch a tent in your large back garden, perhaps just in order to annoy you, or perhaps for the more substantial reason that I have nowhere to live and no land of my own, but I have got hold of a tent, legitimately or otherwise. If I now try to do this thing I want to do, the chances are that the state will intervene on your behalf. If it does, I shall suffer a constraint on my freedom. The same goes for all unpermitted uses of a piece of private property by those who do not own it, and there are always those who do not own it, since 'private ownership by one person presupposes non-ownership on the part of other persons'.² But the free enterprise economy advocated by libertarians rests upon private property: you can sell and buy only what you respectively own and come to own. It follows that the Flew definition is untrue to its *definiendum*, and that the term 'libertarianism' is a gross misnomer for the position it now standardly denotes among philosophers and economists.

How could Flew have brought himself to publish the definition I have criticized? I do not think he was being dishonest. I would not accuse him of appreciating the truth of this particular matter and deliberately falsifying it. Why then is it that Flew, and libertarians like him, and liberals of the kind I described, see the unfreedom in state interference with a person's use of his property, but fail to note the unfreedom in the standing intervention against anyone else's use of it entailed by the fact that it is that person's private property? What explains their monocular vision? Part of the explanation will emerge if we remind ourselves that social and legal constraints on freedom are not the only source of restriction on human action. It restricts my possibilities of action that I lack wings, and therefore cannot fly without major mechanical assistance, but that is not a social or legal constraint on my freedom. Now I suggest that one explanation of our theorists' failure to note that private property constrains freedom is a tendency to take as part of the structure of human existence in general, and therefore as no social or legal constraint on freedom, any structure around which, *merely as things are*, much of our activity is organised. A structure which is not a permanent part of the human condition can be misperceived as being just that, and the institution of private property is a case in point. It is treated as so given that the obstacles it puts on freedom are not perceived, while any impingement on private property itself is immediately noticed. Yet private property pretty well *is* a particular way of distributing freedom *and unfreedom*. It is necessarily associated with the

² Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, Moscow 1970, p. 812.

liberty of private owners to do as they wish with what they own, but it no less necessarily withdraws liberty from those who do not own it. To think of capitalism as a realm of freedom is to overlook half of its nature.

Inconsistent Definitions of Freedom

I should point out that I do not claim that anyone of sound mind will for long deny that private property places restrictions on freedom, once the point has been made. The remarkable thing is that the point so often needs to be made, against what should be obvious absurdities, such as Flew's definition of 'libertarianism'.

But there is a further and independent explanation of how libertarian absurdity is possible. You will notice that I have supposed that to prevent someone from doing something he wants to do is to make him, in that respect, unfree: I am unfree whenever someone interferes, *justifiably or otherwise*, with my actions. But there is a definition of freedom which is implicit in much libertarian writing,³ and which entails that interference is not a sufficient condition of unfreedom. On that definition, which I shall call the *moralized* definition, I am unfree only when someone does or would *unjustifiably* interfere with me, when what he does or would do prevents me from doing what I have a right to do. If one now combines this moralized definition of freedom with a moral endorsement of private property, with a claim that, in standard cases, people have a moral right to the property they legally own, then one reaches the result that the protection of legitimate private property cannot restrict anyone's freedom. It will follow from the moral endorsement of private property that you and the police are justified in preventing me from pitching my tent on your land, and, because of the moralized definition of freedom, it will then further follow that you and the police do not thereby restrict my freedom. So here we have a further explanation of how intelligent philosophers are able to say what they do about capitalism, private property and freedom. But the characterization of freedom which figures in the explanation is unacceptable. For it entails that a properly convicted murderer is not rendered unfree when he is justifiably imprisoned.

Even justified interference reduces freedom. But suppose for a moment that, as libertarians say or imply, it does not. On that supposition one cannot argue, without further ado, that interference with private property is wrong *because* it reduces freedom. For one can no longer take for granted, what is evident on a morally neutral account of freedom, that interference with private property does reduce freedom. Under a moralized account of freedom one must abstain from that assertion until one has shown that private property is morally inviolable. Yet libertarians tend *both* to use a moralized definition of freedom *and* to take it for granted that interference with private property diminishes the owner's freedom. But they can take that for granted only on the morally neutral account of freedom, on which, however, it is equally

³ And sometimes also explicit: see Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York 1974, p. 262.

obvious that the protection of private property diminishes the freedom of *non*-owners, to avoid which consequence they retreated to a moralized definition of the concept. And so they go, back and forth, between inconsistent definitions of freedom, not because they cannot make up their minds which one they like better, but under the propulsion of their desire to occupy what is in fact an untenable position.

Yet libertarians who embrace the moralized definition of freedom need not occupy this inconsistent position. They can escape inconsistency by contriving to justify private property on grounds other than considerations of freedom. They can try, for example, to represent interference with rightfully held private property as unjust, and therefore, by virtue of the moralized definition, invasive of freedom. This is a consistent position. But it still incorporates an unacceptable definition of freedom, and the position is improved⁴ if that is eliminated. We then have a defence of private property on grounds of justice. Freedom falls out of the picture.

Private Property and Justice

Private property is not straightforwardly defensible on grounds of freedom, but it might be an institution demanded by justice. Let us even suppose—to go beyond anything I can claim to have shown—that socializing the principal means of production would enhance freedom, because the extra freedom gained by the less well off would be greater than the amount lost by the rich. It might nevertheless be true that it would be unjust to expropriate and socialize any private property. If so, the case for maintaining private property would be very strong. For, at least at the intuitive level, considerations of justice tend to override considerations of freedom. That is because justice is a matter of rights, and rights are especially potent weapons in moral debate. An argument that a certain course or policy would expand *A*'s freedom tends to be defeated by the consideration that it would infringe *B*'s rights, and a defence of an action of *B*'s on the ground that he has the right to perform it tends not to be defeated by the reply that the action reduces *A*'s freedom.

The chief exponent within philosophy of the currently favoured justice argument for private property is Robert Nozick. He has put with clarity and fierceness the kind of case for private property we found Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan gesturing at early in this lecture. His case is that to prevent people from acquiring private property, and, consequently, to deprive them of their legitimately acquired private property, is to violate their natural rights. Natural rights are rights which are not merely legal ones. We say that we have them on moral, not legal, grounds. You may think that no such rights exist, that the whole idea is nonsense, but I do not agree. I do not think there are natural rights of private property, but I do think there are

⁴ It is improved intellectually in that a certain objection to it no longer applies, but ideologically speaking it is weakened, since there is more ideological power in a recommendation of private property on grounds of justice *and* freedom—however confused, in the recommendation, the relationship between them may be—than in a recommendation of private property on grounds of justice alone.

natural rights, and the following example will, I hope, induce some of the sceptics among you to relax your scepticism. Suppose the government, using constitutional means, forbids protests against its nuclear defence policy on the ground that they endanger national security. Then we should lose the legal right to march as many did on the CND demonstration of 26 October 1980. And one way of expressing anger at the government's decision would be to say: people have a right to protest against any part of government policy. Since *ex hypothesi* that would not be true at the level of *legal* rights, we would be claiming to possess a right which is not a merely legal one. And that is what is meant, at any rate by Nozick and me, by a natural right. The language of natural (or moral) rights is the language of justice, and whoever takes justice seriously must accept that there are natural rights.

Now Marxists do not often talk about justice, and when they do they tend to deny its relevance, or they say that the idea of justice is an illusion. But I think justice occupies a central place in revolutionary Marxist belief. Its presence is betrayed by particular judgments Marxists make, and by the strength of feeling with which they make them. Revolutionary Marxist belief often misdescribes itself, out of lack of clear awareness of its own nature, and Marxist disparagement of the idea of justice is a good example of that deficient self-understanding. I shall try to persuade you that Marxists, whatever they may say about themselves, do have strong beliefs about justice. I shall use an indirect method: I shall describe a characteristic social democratic evasion on the issue of justice, and I shall invite you to agree that Marxists would make a strong judgment of justice at the point where social democrats evade the issue.

Now the most considerable *moral* objections⁵ typical social democrats have to the capitalist market economy, or, rather, to the unmixed capitalist market economy, is that it sends the weak to the wall. A capitalist society with no welfare structure would endanger the very lives of those who, from time to time, and sometimes for a long time, are unemployed; and, through absence of social provision, it would blight the lives of those who are fortunate enough regularly to find buyers for their labour power. In the unmixed market economy the condition of ordinary people is less good than it can and therefore should be made to be. For many social democrats this is the heart of their outlook. They are the contemporary exponents of a tradition of concern for and charity towards the badly off. They sometimes say that what they are in favour of is a *caring* society.

Now to say that the free market harms the weak is not, on the face of it,⁶ to make a judgment about its justice. What would be a claim of justice is that the free market deprives the majority of rights over what morally ought to be held in common. They are, as a result, weak, but

⁵ Such objections are to be distinguished from ones based on the inefficiency or on the wastefulness of the capitalist system.

⁶ I say 'not on the face of it', because the claim might properly figure in the course of an argument to the conclusion that capitalism is unjust, but it is not, as it stands, a thesis of justice.

that need not be part of the reason for saying that the institution which causes them to be so is unjust. Whether or not it is, *the socialist objection of justice to the market economy is that it allows private ownership of means of existence which no one has the right to own privately, and therefore rests upon an unjust foundation.* I am sure that revolutionaries believe this in their hearts, even those revolutionaries who deny that they believe it, because of ill-conceived philosophical commitments.

Social democrats who are unwilling to advance in the direction of the justice critique of capitalism will tend to lose in confrontation with libertarian Tories. For the Tory libertarian will acknowledge and regret that the free market harms many people. He may even, as Nozick does, encourage philanthropy as a remedy. What he condemns is *constrained* philanthropy, welfare payments sustained by taxation exacted by the might of the state. Such taxation, in his view, violates rights. If you care about badly off people, he says, then by all means help them, but don't force other people to do so: you have no right to force *them* to do so. And to this position it is not a principled reply to sketch forth vividly the inhuman effects of absence of coercive transfer payments. The principled reply is that the socializing state is not violating rights, or even overriding them in the interest of something more important, but righting wrongs: it is rectifying violations of rights, violations inherent in the structure of private property.

I said that libertarians can be in favour of philanthropy. They can even agree that the rich are morally obliged to help the poor. For it is false that whenever a person has a moral obligation the state has the right to force him to honour it. One might think that there is a strong moral obligation on healthy adults to donate blood in an emergency, when life is at stake, yet, in full consistency with that belief, regard as abominable a law requiring them to donate their blood, even if, without such a law, much avoidable death will occur. And if ownership of private property has a morally privileged status, akin to what most people think is my inviolable right to dispose over the parts of my own body—such as my own kidneys, one of which might be urgently needed by someone else—then it is an unacceptable invasion of the rights of the rich to tax them in favour of the poor, even if the rich lose less from such taxation than the poor gain (since the marginal utility of income is higher the lower you go down the income scale). That utilitarian argument begs a large question about justice. For if wealth belongs as of right to those who have it, then it is just too bad that others would benefit from some of what the rich have more than they do.

Social Democratic Evasion

In the course of his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Karl Marx criticized socialists who 'put the principal stress on' the standard of living of the working class. He objected that 'any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions (or means) of production themselves'.⁷ It is usually thought that

⁷ Marx/Engels *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Vol. II, Moscow 1962, p.25. Marx goes on to say: 'The capitalist mode of production . . . rests on the fact that the material

he emphasized this causal truth because of its policy significance: it is bad strategy to attempt to operate on the maldistribution of income, instead of on the more fundamental maldistribution of what generates income. I have no doubt that Marx did believe that, but I think that he also intended to convey a distinct and independently defensible thesis, namely that it is a confusion to direct censure against the predictable and regular consequences of a cause which is not itself subjected to criticism. If you object to the consequences for welfare of a certain structure of property you must, at the very least, object to the cause—that structure—*because* of its consequences; and if the cause has been defended on grounds which prescind from consequences, then you must go beyond a discussion of consequences *considered merely as such*⁸ and confront those grounds. I suggest that social democrats tend to refrain from these necessary further moves, which raise issues more radical than they like to face. And I suggest that it lies in the nature of the revolutionary socialist attitude to proceed to those issues. That is why revolutionaries find confiscation a more appropriate response to severe inequality of ownership than perpetual rearguard action against the effects of that inequality. If I may be allowed to oversimplify and exaggerate, it is as though social democrats are sensitive to the effects of exploitation on people, but not to the fact of exploitation itself. They want to succour the exploited while minimizing confrontation with those who exploit them.

I have insisted that the way to respond to Tory belief in the justice of capitalism is to enter the terrain of justice, and I say that revolutionaries, however much they may like to deny it, are already there, whereas most social democrats are not. But only most social democrats, and the present critique does not apply to that minority of them who do regard capitalism as fundamentally unjust but who think that for practical reasons policy should be inspired by other considerations, since they think that there is simply no prospect of eliminating capitalism at a tolerable cost. I disagree with those social democrats about policy, but they have not been my target. My target has been that majority of social democrats whose thinking is so unradical that they do not reach the point where they have to cite practical reasons for not attacking capitalism in a fundamental way.

conditions of production are in the hands of non-workers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labour power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically'.

It follows that the capitalist mode of production 'rests on' a certain distribution of the elements of production. When, therefore, later in the same paragraph, Marx disparages attention to 'distribution' in favour of attention to 'the mode of production', he is there using 'distribution' as an abbreviation for 'distribution of the means of consumption'. He cannot be intending to say that the mode of production is more fundamental than distribution of any kind, since he has already said that the mode of production rests on one kind of distribution. Yet the standard Marxist view of the passage, a product of hasty reading, is that here Marx says that it is production, not distribution, which matters; and this misreading is one source of Marxist hostility to the idea of justice. So I want to emphasize that Marx is not saying: 'Give up your obsession with just distribution'. He is saying: 'Prosecute your concern about distribution at the appropriately fundamental level.'

⁸ See footnote 6 above.

I have maintained that the view that capitalism is unjust is an elementary Marxist conviction, albeit one which is sometimes submerged. But I have not *argued* for the view that capitalism is unjust. The relevant argument is too long to be presented here, but I shall describe some of its stages. It begins with the idea that capitalism is just if and only if capitalists have the right to own the means of production they do, for it is their ownership of means of production which enables them to make profit out of labour, and if that ownership is legitimate, then so too is making profit out of labour. The key question, then, is whether capitalist private property is morally defensible. Now every actual piece of private property, large or small, either is or is made of something which was once the private property of no one. If, then, someone claims a right to hold a certain piece of private property he has, then we must ask, apart from how he in particular got it, how the thing came to be (anyone's) private property in the first place, and examine the justice of that transformation. I believe we shall find that the original transformation is unjust, that, in a sense which I hope to make clear on another occasion, property is theft, theft of what morally speaking belongs to us all in common.

Some will think it strange that someone who is more or less a Marxist should propose to himself the project of demonstrating that the capitalist system is unjust. That does not seem a very Marxist thing to get involved in. It sounds like moral philosophy, not Marxism. But whoever thinks that should ask himself why Karl Marx wrote the last part of Volume I of *Capital*, the part on primitive accumulation, in which he contended that a propertyless proletariat was created in Great Britain as a result of violent expropriation of small-scale private property and property held in common. Part of his aim was to refute the idea that capitalists became monopoly owners of means of production as a result of their own industry and frugality, or that of their forbears. He was trying to show that British capitalism rests upon an unjust foundation.

To the extent that Marx's historical allegations are true, they tell against the pretension to legitimacy of British capital. But however successful he is on that score, his success from a broader point of view is limited. For he does not say, and it is not true, that primitive accumulation is always a savage affair. Capital does not always 'come into the world dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt'.⁹ Sometimes it emerges more discreetly. And anyway, Marxists do not believe merely that this or that capitalist society, or even every capitalist society, is unjust because of its particular origin. Marxists believe that capitalism as such is unjust, that, therefore, there could not be a just formation of capitalist private property, and that thesis requires moral rather than historical argument.

Justice and Historical Materialism

In my book on Marx I affirmed and defended an orthodox conception of historical materialism, in which history is the growth of human

⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, Moscow 1961, p. 760.

productive power, and forms of society rise and fall according as they enable and promote, or frustrate and impede, that growth. In the phase in which it promotes productive progress, a given form of society, because it promotes productive progress, contributes to the ultimate liberation of humanity, to the achievement of a condition in which the creative capacities of people in general can be developed, instead of just the creative capacities of an elite whom people in general serve. Capitalism was an indispensable means of raising human productive power from a rather low to a very high level, and it did just that in what Marxists allow was its progressive phase. But if it had that progressive phase, then, some will say, it is surely not unjust as such, but at most unjust in its reactionary phase, when it is no longer needed as a means of increasing productive power, and is, moreover, no longer good at doing it. Is there not, then, an inconsistency between the idea that capitalism is an inherently unjust society and some of the principal theses of my book on *Karl Marx's Theory of History*?

That is a difficult question, and the difficulty is not mine alone. Karl Marx said that 'development of the productive forces of social labour is the historical task and justification of capital(ism)'¹⁰ but it is nevertheless clear whose side he would have been on in the class struggle at *every* stage of capitalist development. For if the working conditions of the industrial revolution were necessary for productive progress, it remains true that the workers suffering those conditions were victims of injustice, and that their bosses were exploiters. There is a tension between the Marxist commitment to advancement of productive power and the Marxist commitment to those at whose expense that advancement occurs. I cannot fully relieve the tension here, but I shall state four logically independent propositions which, brought into proper relationship with one another, would, I think, do so: (i) All exploitation, including that which contributes to liberation, is unjust. (ii) Liberation requires productive progress, and productive progress requires exploitation. (iii) Whether or not productive progress was inevitable, exploitation was. That is, exploitation was not only unavoidable for productive progress, but unavoidable *tout court*. Justice without productive progress was not an historically feasible option, because justice was not an historically feasible option. And finally (iv) ruling classes always exploit subordinate classes to a greater extent than productive progress would require.

For some years right-wing ideas have flourished in Western society, in highly refined and also in crude forms. And while the recent virulence of reactionary thought is in good measure explained by factors which lie outside the domain of thought and theory, the impact in practice of the right-wing victory in consciousness has been tremendous. In this lecture I have sought to reaffirm some fundamental socialist convictions. I shall end with a quotation from *The Communist Manifesto*: 'The theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single phrase: Abolition of private property'.

¹⁰ Ibid, Volume III, p. 254.

Different Conceptions of Party: Labour's Constitutional Debates

The Constitution of the Labour Party has for some years been the chosen terrain for an intensifying battle between left and right, over the issues of mandatory reselection of MP's by their constituency parties, the determination of the party's election manifesto, and the method of electing the party leader.* These controversies reached a climax at the 1980 Conference, and at the subsequent Special Party Conference in January this year, whose decision on a formula for the already-agreed electoral college furnished the occasion for the resignation of a significant segment of its parliamentary leadership to form a rival Social Democratic party. The precise formula adopted¹ for the electoral college (40% to the affiliated trade unions, 30% to the parliamentary party and 30% to the constituencies) was somewhat fortuitous, and it seems likely that the issue may be reopened and the formula modified to increase the parliamentary party's share at the next annual conference. But the electoral college formula is primarily important not for itself,² but in the context of a much wider conflict over the nature, control, and ideological orientation of the Labour

Party. The constitutional issues have been taken and fought by all sides as a symbol of these deeper conflicts. For the left, these changes represent an attempt to strengthen the control of the party outside Parliament over its parliamentary leadership. For the right, they represent a threat from 'unrepresentative activists' to undermine the conventions of British parliamentary government. For the trade unions they probably have the more limited aim of increasing the union's influence over Labour Governments' economic policies, which were turned against union interests particularly in the last years of the 1974-79 Labour Government.

The purpose of this article is to clarify these conflicts, and the different latent conceptions of political parties that underlie them. The issues are important ones. For many on the left, the parliamentarist limitations of the Labour Party have long been a subject for criticism. This is now all the more severe given the failure of the last Labour Government, not least to achieve the minimal aim of retaining office, and the harsh Thatcherite programmes to which it has therefore opened the way. There has been, since the election, some significant move to the left in the Labour Party, reflected in constitutional and in policy changes, and in the election to the leadership of Michael Foot, the first leader since the war to have been in conviction and political formation a committed member of the radical and Labour left. If significant changes in the party are to be achieved, now is the time when their purposes should be clarified. Yet while there has been much discussion of the party constitution, there has been little enquiry into the different theoretical conceptions which underlie present disagreements, or into 'sociological' problems of what parties actually do, or should do, in a capitalist society such as this. These are the deficiencies in the debate which this article will attempt to repair.

Reference will also be made to a wider discussion among Marxists, especially in the European Communist movement, which has had to approach the problem of party organization from the opposite direction, from concern about its excessive power rather than its debility. Whereas the Labour left in Britain has wanted to strengthen the party organization, socialist critics of Communist Party organization in Eastern Europe, such as Bahro³ and Medvedev,⁴ have been pre-

* I would like to thank Robin Blackburn, Belle Harris, Margaret Rustin and Michael Walzer for their encouragement and help in preparing this article. They do not necessarily share the views presented in it.

¹ The formula recommended by the NEC to the Conference (33% to the unions, the parliamentary party and the constituencies, and 1% to the socialist societies) was an improvement on the one actually adopted, in providing a more defensible proportion of votes to the unions, and giving at least a nominal recognition to the socialist societies. It was also reported that the NEC wished to give constituency parties the option of balloting within their section of the electoral college.

² It is doubtful if in practice the present formula would have altered the election of any leader since the War, with the possible exception of Foot whose election was probably helped by the prospect of a new voting system. This is because divisions in the Labour Party have not normally been *between* the various institutional sectors, but *within* them.

³ See R. Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, NLB London 1978.

⁴ R. Medvedev, *On Socialist Democracy*, London 1975.

occupied with the excessive bureaucratic privileges and power of their party apparatuses. This article attempts to relate these two perspectives, and seeks to explore whether means can be found of extending the importance of party as a modality of power in society, while yet avoiding the enormous costs of one party systems under 'actually existing socialisms'.

The Origins of the Constitutional Debate

Conflicts over the nature and control of the Labour Party have a long history, and the apparent absurdity of a possibly major split being occasioned by the innocuous institution of an electoral college is only intelligible in this context. The origins of this argument, as with so much else in the contemporary state of the Labour Party, lie in the 'revisionist' attempts to transform the party in the late 1950's. For twenty years before that, the Labour Party's tripartite structure of constituency parties, unions, and parliamentary party, had been in a condition of relatively stable equilibrium. While a predominantly right wing leadership prevailed in both unions and in Parliament, potential constitutional conflicts between the institutional sectors of the party could be easily nullified. The Bevanite left, with roots chiefly in the constituency parties, was in a permanent minority position at Conference and in the parliamentary party, and its members were kept in line by stringent party discipline. During this period, in which there was the memory of recent relative success through the war-time Coalition and the 1945 Labour Government, the Labour Party defined itself as the party of the working class, though in an essentially populist way. Its majoritarian, collectivist conception of itself was rarely put under strain by internal conflict. The powers of decision-making by the Party Conference, and of legitimate leadership by the National Executive Committee, were used to enforce essentially right-wing positions. But with the election defeats of the years of 'affluence', culminating in the 1959 election, revisionist Labour politicians, led intellectually by Crosland and politically by Gaitskell, called in question the appropriateness of a working class identification for the Labour Party in what (they argued) was becoming an increasingly classless, or at least pluralist, society. Through revisionist attempts to change the party's commitment to public ownership (the Clause 4 debates) and through a vigorous right-wing response to the unilateralist conference victory of 1960, constitutional relations between activists, unions and parliamentary party were brought into question. Gaitskell defied and overthrew the unilateralist conference decision, and though in doing so he restored the constitutional legitimacy of his position by realigning the Conference with it, he had shown that the parliamentary leadership had a substantial autonomy and could in no way be regarded as automatically subject to the will of the party outside. Relations with the trade unions became problematic when the unions inflicted defeat on the Clause 4 revisions, as much for traditionalist as for particularly 'left' reasons. While continuing to depend on the trade unions for support, Crosland and Gaitskell acquired a critical and negative view of them which has remained an important strand of revisionist thinking.

Relationships between these different institutional sectors of the party appeared to be patched up by the election to the leadership of Harold Wilson in 1963, and by his skilful transmutation of ideological differences into consensual technological radicalism in the run-up to the 1964 election. The subsequent election of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon to the leaderships of the Transport Workers and Engineering Workers unions was to give a left-of-centre inflection to trade union as well as parliamentary leaderships (in Jones's case continuing the orientation set by Cousins) and this alliance seemed a new basis for operating the tripartite constitution. In opposition, and in the early years of Labour Governments before disillusion set in, this 'leftish' alliance could and did work. Policy compromises on paper were relatively easy to make, and all sides had a powerful electoral interest in the appearance of unity. But the experience of office, both in 1964 and 1974, was a very different matter, once governments were pushed to the right. During both governments the previously left-of-centre Wilson set his constitutional prerogatives as Prime Minister above any other claims on him, and asserted the powers of Government over the claims of party. 'The government must govern', he proclaimed and, this turned out to signify not the independence of government vis-a-vis the International Monetary Fund or the United States, but vis-a-vis the trade unions and the Labour Party Conference. As Lewis Minkin has described in his admirable study,⁵ Conference repeatedly voted against Labour Governments in the sixties and seventies, and its votes were virtually ignored. To greater effect, perhaps, these governments reached breaking-point in their relations with the trade union movement, the 1964-70 government over *In Place of Strife* in 1969, and the 1974-79 government over the suicidally ill-judged 5% pay norm of 1978-9 and the consequent 'winter of discontent'. It is from different 'readings' of these failures—in electoral and other terms—that the current constitutional debates have sprung. For all the contestants in this dispute, there is the sense that the old options and compromises have been explored to their limits, and that some renewal of the structure is needed.

Two other more sociological factors need to be indicated to place in context these debates. These are changes in modes of political activity acting upon the old forms of the party constitution. On the revisionist side, the development of mass communications, especially television, has accentuated the importance and autonomy of political leaderships over their actual followings. What is in effect political marketing, via public opinion polls and television image, has become a principal instrument of political power, displacing the apparent importance of corporate attachment to unions or party membership—these may even appear to be liabilities. It is now at least possible to conceive that a group of highly visible parliamentary leaders like the so-called 'Gang of Three' (Shirley Williams, William Rogers, David Owen) could appeal to the voters over the heads of the mass organizations of the labour movement, and win as much support as the official party. This would not have been a conceivable option for dissidents before Gaitskell, and seems never to have been seriously considered until

⁵ Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference*, Manchester (revised edition) 1980.

now. The dependence, therefore, of the leadership of those days on the support and votes of unions and constituency parties was much greater. On the left, a younger generation of educated activists has come into the Labour Party, and also into white collar and public sector unions, and has a more demanding and 'participatory' approach to party affairs. The growth of pressure group politics, the radicalization resulting from increased education, especially higher education, and the development of a radical and Marxist sub-culture, have had some effect on the Labour Party itself, by no means only through the sectarian activity to which these various changes are usually reduced by their opponents.

So at both ends of the ideological spectrum, there are social tendencies making for polarization. Not only is there this pressure from both ends, so to speak, but also a common awareness of the general decline recently experienced by the Labour Party, in its vote and its membership. A reappraisal and restructuring of the Party therefore seems desirable to all sides, though they agree on nothing else. The experience of the unions in the last months of the 1974-9 Labour Government, and their justified sense of betrayal by it, the countervailing reaction to the left which the Thatcher experiment is naturally bringing about, and the increasing political demands by activists, have all brought a substantial pressure from the left. Changes in the constitution have been one important means of giving effect to this, though one open to much criticism as being unduly internal and unrelated to more important programmatic issues. One might estimate that these pressures now have only a limited and modest potential, and that neither the trade unions nor the constituency parties have a capacity to push the party further to the left prior to the next election.⁶ Whereas a rearguard action by the right would probably succeed in containing the changes made, in fact a much more radical right-wing response has been given to them, initiating major departures, of a liberal kind, from the previous forms of British Labourism. One should not ignore the potential for change contained in the left-wing and trade union initiatives. Nevertheless, the most salient feature of the threatened split is not that it is a rational response on the Right to the imposition of a new form of Labour Party by the Left. It would be more true to say that a reassertion of the historic basis of the Labour Party, with some leftward inflection, is no longer acceptable to sections of the middle-class Right, and a break to a less socialist and less class-based form of social democracy is therefore being attempted.

Alternative Concepts of Party

Claims have been made in the current constitutional debates for different concepts of representation, and for different legitimations of leadership. There are many detailed versions of each position, but perhaps the most fundamental difference is between implicitly indi-

⁶ David Owen has virtually acknowledged this, in saying that he expected that the Party would in fact backtrack on most of the controversial policy issues, such as unilateralism, the electoral college formula, and the NEC. He has, however, rejected 'fudging and mudging'.

vidualist and collectivist theories. Individualist theories conceive democratic politics essentially as a matter of competitive leadership, in which alternative leaders or groups of leaders compete for power with each other. Historically, in this conception, the idea of leadership precedes the idea of open competition. Burke⁷ combined a liberal conception of the proper autonomy of parliamentary representatives, not to be bound by outside interests, with an underlying traditionalist view that this measure of rational parliamentary autonomy would achieve the proper representation of each major corporate part of society. In the twentieth century, Schumpeter⁸ has given the idea of competitive leadership its classic modern form. Arguing in opposition to the Rousseauian concept of the general will, one of the main foundations of collectivist theory, he asserted a competitive theory of leadership, thus giving elite theory (that politics is fundamentally about domination) a liberal, ruleful, competitive form. Max Weber's political writings⁹ have a similar intention.

The assumption in this model is that leaders will recruit a following, through their charisma and entrepreneurial capacity, rather than that followings will recruit leaders. Schumpeter's view of this process is that the best individuals will succeed in this competitive process, by obtaining a larger following and more electoral votes. On pluralist assumptions about structured conflicts of interest in society, one might expect that such political entrepreneurs will compete to represent different social groups, though the outcome of this might be expected to be a fluid and fluctuating pattern of support which precludes the formation of permanent collectivities able to constrain and mandate their representatives. This theory is a version of free market economic theory applied to the political market place. According to this model, the greater the freedom of adaptation to changing preferences by the voter, the more satisfactory the outcome. Parties able to control representatives or lay down collective policies in this theory are the equivalent of a kind of monopoly power, inhibiting the optimization of preferences among individual voters. The view that this is now an appropriate system of representation in Britain is consistent with pluralist assumptions, central to Labour revisionism, about the breakdown of the English class system which has hitherto structured political loyalties in a more collectivist manner. This view of individual leaders as the source of all political initiative seems strongly subscribed to by Roy Jenkins and the members of the 'Gang of Three', for whom the absence of any actual collective demands from the base for a new political initiative, other than those registered by opinion polls, appears not to be a crucial consideration. The idea seems to be that charismatic and intellectual powers on their own can be expected to summon together a new following if an initiative is judged correctly.

This view of politics harks back to pre-socialist forms of political

⁷ Burke's relevance for the understanding of modern political parties is discussed in Samuel Beer, *Modern British Politics*, London 1965.

⁸ J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London (reprinted) 1977.

⁹ See David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, London 1974. Weber's theory and preferences are pluralist rather than individualist, however.

party. It corresponds to the party systems described by Duverger¹⁰ as parties of notables, in which leaders with personal or local followings are able to dominate representative parliaments, and resist collectivist control by mass memberships. In Britain, a certain homogeneity of class formation has restricted this pattern for many decades. While the Conservative Party avoids majoritarian decision-making by the membership, and obviously subscribes to a strongly hierarchical conception of leadership, nevertheless there are informal elite mechanisms of corporate cohesion and control, and open competition between alternative leaderships rather rarely breaks out. The clearest modern example of a system of competitive notable politics is probably the electoral system of the United States,¹¹ where greater regional and ethnic division, and weaker party and class organization, provides the conditions for more open individualist political competition. In this system, political choices are made through the means of choices between individual candidates, through the primary system and between Republicans and Democrats, and through a much wider scope for the electoral choice of public officials, rather than through the mechanisms of choice between coherent programmes structured through collective party organization. It is a move in this 'American' direction of more open pluralistic competition that the Social Democratic break seems to envisage.¹² Clearly, in a society with structured conflicts of interests such as this one, a new party would have to identify itself with particular 'constituencies' (in the significantly pluralist American sense of that word), and in reality these would include, if the model were a success, trade unions. But as in America, these relationships would be more external, a matter of ad hoc electoral alliances, not of permanent joint institutions like the existing British Labour Party.

The specific constitutional formulations offered in the Labour Party debate which correspond to this individualist conception have been various. Early in the debate, it was asserted by those on the right that Members of Parliament were elected by the whole electorate, and therefore owed their legitimation to all the voters and not to any specific segment of them. This does correspond to a necessary constitutional convention that MP's or governments should endeavour to represent everyone in *some* sense (after all an election is not an act of conquest, and the elected wish to retain the loyalty to the political system of those who have voted for the defeated as well). But this conception can clearly only be part of the truth, since politics is an expression of conflict too, and competing parties must in practice represent some specific interests against others. Furthermore, it offers

¹⁰ M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, London 1959.

¹¹ Another contemporary example of a 'notable' system is the Christian Democrat Party of Italy. In this case, the system of election is less open to competition (unity at the polls is imposed by the common threat from the PCI) but intense factional competition takes place among the elected over the control and distribution of patronage.

¹² One imagines that the political example of especially the earlier two members of the Kennedy family may not be far from the minds of the Social Democratic leaders, not least a desire to emulate the Kennedys' successful and professional command over image and rhetoric. The Kennedys were also, however, dedicated and skilled operators of the Democrat Party machine.

no conception of how candidates should be chosen. This may be unimportant if one is merely defending the autonomy of those already elected, against outside pressure, but it is no good if one wants to justify the formation of a new political party for which no-one has yet voted.

Other individualist formulations are better adapted to the process of choosing as well as defending elected candidates. One version argues that all voters should be able to take some part in candidate selection, as for example in the American primary system in which all registered voters for a party may take part. This view also appears to have little following in Britain, such would be the expense and the permanent political demands of a system of primaries. Furthermore, one might expect that the British would be culturally opposed to that degree of open competition, having a social structure which in general seeks to institutionalize leadership in some contained way. Even the Liberal Party, most ideologically committed to individualist conceptions, has a membership structure which has sometimes been able to constrain its leadership to remain faithful to collective principles, for example in its resistance to coalition.

As the constitutional debate has evolved, it has become clear that only two options are acceptable to the social democratic wing of the Labour Party. One is to preserve parliamentary autonomy as far as possible, by opposing an electoral college in principle, or, if it has to be conceded, opting for the largest proportional weight of votes for the parliamentary party. This position tacitly accepts the existing system of selection of parliamentary candidates, and hopes that the convention that MP's are in practice little interfered with, and are given permanent tenure, will protect the parliamentary party from outside pressure, as it has previously done. (This convention has not only protected MP's from pressure, but has tolerated a steady and significant flow of MP's rightwards out of the Labour Party. It is however now threatened by the proposals for mandatory re-selection of all MPs by their constituency parties prior to every general election.)

The second option, more recently advocated by the social democratic wing, has been a commitment to the idea that decisions about the leadership, and by extension about candidates and policies, should be taken by the whole membership of the party, by secret ballot. This option is an ambiguous one, and is supported by different individuals and groups for different reasons. By no means all of those who support it are hostile to the collective determination of party policy, or to greater membership control over elected members. Some of them, such as Michael Meacher and Frank Field,¹³ see it as a positive means of regenerating the party, and increasing membership participation. But where, for some, balloting the constituency membership is a way of increasing participation, for others it is principally attractive as a

¹³ See the correspondence from M. Meacher MP (*Guardian*, January 27th.) and F. Field MP (*Guardian*, January 30th). Frank Field recommends factory branches as the best means for trade union participation in Labour Party voting. These branches were authorised in principle by the last Annual Conference, but the proposal has yet to be implemented.

strategy for displacing the trade unions' power in the party, and is supported also on an assumption that in a free contest by ballot, social democratic tendencies would prevail over left socialist ones. In these ways it would thus further the 'modernization' of the Labour Party away from its traditional working class base and socialist ideological legacy. The disentangling of these divergent interpretations and purposes will be later considered after some discussion of collectivist positions.

Labour's 'Democratic Centralism' and its Limits

The collectivist view of politics holds that politics is essentially about the expression of common interests, and as Samuel Beer¹⁴ has argued, this has been the Labour Party's historic view of its role in relation to the working class. The Labour Party has adopted strongly majoritarian and disciplined methods of decision-making in pursuit of this objective. The organized movement comes to decisions about policies, and about the selection of candidates, and the outcome of these majority decisions is then put before the electorate, being now binding on defeated minorities who wish to retain the Party's credentials. A distinction is made in this model between the formulation of policy by the membership, through various institutional procedures, and its subsequent presentation to the electorate and enactment in legislation. In theory anyway, the process of participation in policy-formulation is a kind of participatory democracy, implicitly Rousseauian in justification. Decisions are made through collective discussion, on a face-to-face basis, not individualistically by the aggregation of votes through the ballot. Actual participation and exposure to the rational process of discussion is valued, and rewarded by the right to vote. Each component institution of the Labour Party—local branch, council Labour Group, PLP, trade union branch, conference, NEC—adopts this same majoritarian approach, in which decisions are deliberatively made by the members or delegates present, and are then held to be binding on all. The Left was subordinated strictly by these conventions when it was in a usual minority, in Parliament and the NEC, but may more often now be in a position to impose these disciplines on its opponents. The formal procedures which characterize Labour Party meetings derive from the fact that conflicts have to be resolved in a way which preserves unity of purpose, and confidence in procedures is an assurance that participants must be able to count on.¹⁵

Neither the participatory nor the majoritarian aspects of this process encroach very far into the political system. In Government, constitutional conventions of prime ministerial power (ultimately and historically derived from the authority of the monarch) overrule the

¹⁴ Samuel Beer, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Where decisions do not carry this force of binding minorities to them, where subscription to a decision only follows if one agrees with it, not merely if it has been properly made, then formal procedures lack this salience. The conventions of the various sub-cultures of the new left are often different in this respect from those of the labour movement, consensus and unanimity being preferred to ruleful conflict. Where consensus then fails, conflict may be more disruptive than when it is routinely regulated by procedural rules.

parliamentary party in the appointment of ministers and thus effectively defeat the idea of majority decision by Cabinet (dissidents can always be sacked).¹⁶ And of course the present argument by the Right is about the defence of the autonomy of the parliamentary party and of individual MP's from majority control by the party outside Parliament.

The idea of participation in the Labour Party has not extended much beyond the formulation of policy and its legislative enactment by the State. Policies formulated democratically are to be implemented bureaucratically. Nor is this model of policy formulation in the Labour Party exactly a model of democracy in practice, considering the 'block vote' and the various contingent methods of trade union decision-making. But at this point it is most important to note the difference of principle between the individualist ideas of competitive representation of the Right, and the collectivist ideas of majoritarian, deliberative determination of policy held on the Left and in the mainstream tradition of the Labour Party.

R.H.S. Crossman,¹⁷ in a now famous passage, described the Labour Party as having a somewhat democratic centralist character, for all its anti-Communist rhetoric. In exchange for doing the electoral work, he said, members were given the illusion of effective participation in formation of policy, through a system of delegated representation which effectively concentrates power in the hands of a small minority. Certainly the Labour Party has shown little talent or enthusiasm for large scale participation or mobilization in the last decades, and it is experienced in many areas as a closed and oligarchic structure. Crossman however shared too many assumptions with the elite theorists such as McKenzie,¹⁸ and in his article underestimated the actual influence of the constituency membership and the party's 'public opinion' on policy, to which indeed he partly owed his own political prominence. Minkin's study¹⁹ has extensively documented the more even balance of forces within the party, and the degree to which party programmes are the outcome, in part, of pressures mobilized through the membership. The legalism and sanctification of Conference resolutions and Manifestos, indeed, is the principal means of resolving this delicate balance of interests within the party, and evidence that these conflicts do lead to durable compromises. The problem cannot be understood exclusively as one of excessive leadership domination.

The left has tended to share Crossman's analysis of the position, and to blame its failure to achieve adequately socialist Manifestos, and still more the failure of its Governments to implement them, on this unfavourable balance of power. The recent constitutional proposals, though they are happily part of a much deeper consideration of party

¹⁶ *The Crossman Diaries*, paperback edition, London 1979, are of course a crucial text on the nature of Prime Ministerial power.

¹⁷ R.H.S. Crossman, Introduction to *The English Constitution* by Walter Bagehot, London 1963.

¹⁸ R. McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, Heinemann 1964. This was a most influential text describing what was considered to be the normal and proper condition of domination of political parties by their leaderships.

¹⁹ L. Minkin, *op. cit.*

structure and function than this, are based on the view that what is chiefly required is to strengthen the power of the party membership, through its delegated representatives in Constituency Party and National Executive, over its Parliamentary representatives. The conflict is interpreted as being between socialist activists on the one hand (who are held to represent the mass of working class in a more or less theoretically formulated way), and would-be parliamentary notables and media-men on the other, representing only the most compromised or non-socialist kind of reformism. This argument over the sources of legitimate authority—the party membership or the electorate—and over the alternative conceptions of representation discussed above, overlaps with more pragmatic disagreements about the degree of political compromise needed to produce an electorally successful programme. Leftists believe that more socialist programmes would achieve greater working class support, rightists draw attention to the evidence of the conservatism of the voters, and also to the many non-working class votes which Labour is said to need to win.

The Labour leftist position has in some ways been a pale shadow of other vanguardisms. It has over-estimated the representativeness of the existing activists, it has been too narrow in its response to potential issues and new forms of radicalism, and it has been too preoccupied with State power. Of course, Labour leftism has been a parliamentary and electoralist version, mainly concerned with the determination of policy proposals and with electing a Government to carry them out. It has been generous-spirited, regarding most internationalist and liberal issues, and in practice has reflected a somewhat beleaguered defensive formation, in which activists sustain the usually hard and unrewarded work of keeping political organization going by celebrating the commitment, spirit of service and tenacity of the long-time party member. In this way activists have been all too aware of the odds against them, and of how different they are from their surrounding community: their problem has been how to break out of this relative isolation. It is ironic, given their treatment at the hands of the Right in its days of power ("... pacifists neutralists and fellow travellers...") that this segment of the old left is now patronized as the 'respectable left' by social democrats who appear to have none of the former's loyalty and fortitude in defeat. There is clearly now, in addition, a more tough-minded and organizationally-determined younger generation in the constituency parties, committed to a somewhat similar Statist approach, but not reconciled as the older generation became to a kind of permanent minority position. From the point of view of the Labour left, it is tempting to try to increase the leverage of the existing membership within the Party organization, and hope that the breakthrough can then be made, using the full national resources of the party and its parliamentary leadership to reach and move public opinion. In many ways one can see this as a positive and necessary impulse. But it seems unlikely to succeed unless accompanied by a different and more open conception of what a party is and can be, and by a substantial increase in its active support. If this does not happen then no deep change in the internal balance of party forces will be possible, unless by large-scale defection. Nor is public opinion, not even working class public opinion, likely to follow for long a political

programme whose actual organized base of support is as narrow as the Labour Party's now is. The alternative opinion-forming pressures on the electorate are too great for this.

The Tripartite Tradition and Trade Union Representation

We have considered 'individualist' and 'collectivist' theories of representation in so far as they underlie current Labour Party debates. Consideration will now be given to the implications of two more specific constitutional recommendations for the Labour Party. The first of these is the concept of tripartite control—the relationship between parliamentary party, trade unions and constituency membership which is the actual means of coexistence of the political and industrial wings of the party. Thus tripartite doctrine has recently been reformulated in the device of the electoral college for the election of the party leader. While constitutionally this is an innovation it seems in practice to be more a means of reinstating and reaffirming the status quo, against either the claims of a stronger membership control, or of absolute Parliamentary autonomy, which have been urged by Left and Right wing factions respectively in the polarization following the election defeat of 1979. When one looks for a rational justification of such a tripartite system, one can only discover a kind of working class version of Edmund Burke's view that the Constitution (in this case the Labour Party Constitution) represents different corporate interests, by tradition. One finds that alternative more radical solutions of different kinds (the universalism of one member one direct vote, for example) are regarded as dangerous abstract interferences with customary ways. Such conservative justifications do seem a curious basis²⁰ for a socialist Party's organization. They do however have the merit of embodying a more inclusive concept of the party than any of the more consistent schema that are currently under debate.

The main corporate interest which this Burkean formula protects is that of the actual representation of the working class, through the trade unions, since trade unions remain working class institutions, under the control of working class leaders, to a much greater degree than Constituency Labour Parties. From the point of view of the balance of class forces in the Labour Party, therefore, the conservative formula of tripartite representation is likely to maintain the Labour Party's character as predominantly representing the unionised working class, and especially the manual working class, more than any other mechanism would do. This is also likely, of course, to be a force for political centrism within the Labour Party, in that the highly institutionalized trade unions are less likely to become committed to radical political programmes of either social democratic or leftist kinds than an organization based exclusively on political membership. The trade unions' interest in political programmes is based, that is to say, predominantly on considerations of interest rather than on ideological formulation

²⁰ Tom Nairn's vigorous and influential critique of the Labour Party's 'corporatism' did however draw attention to Labour traditionalism in many forms. (Cf. T. Nairn 'Anatomy of the Labour Party', *NLR* 27 and 28, reprinted in R. Blackburn (ed.) *Revolution and Class Struggle*, London 1977.)

and this, though it has many obvious limitations from the point of view of achieving political goals, insulates trade unions against political tendencies of either right or left wing kinds. The historic division of labour between the 'industrial' and 'political' wings of the Labour movement has the effect of blocking off the unions from the effects of both bourgeois and socialist rationalities, preserving them as enclaves, mainly, of working class corporatism. I have observed in another article²¹ that if trade unions had been enabled to enforce their interests more effectively on Labour Governments, many of the disasters of the last two Labour Governments might have been avoided, and their stronger representation in the party constitution might be a means to that end in future.

There might of course be 'ideal solutions' which would be more democratic in principle, and would not have the negative effect of reducing the 'working class weighting' of Labour Party decisions. If, for example, trade unions were centres of Labour political activity in proportion to the size of their affiliated membership, then 'one member one vote' systems would have less risk of reducing trade unionists' participation. But in practice, they are not, though one hopes that work-place branches will help to improve political involvement.²²

The actual effect of removing representation from trade unions and conferring it exclusively on party members in the constituencies by a balloting system would be to increase the ideological polarization of the Party and to increase its likelihood of splitting, and also to further weaken the influence of working class members and leaders in it. It seems likely that these probable effects are at least partially intended by some of the advocates of this solution. The formalization of traditional 'tripartism' through the electoral college is now therefore a safeguard against attempts both to reduce collectivistic decision making in the Labour Party, through strengthening the autonomous leadership of the Parliamentary Party, and associated with it, attempts to reduce the weight of organised working class interests, expressed through the unions, in the party structure. The Burkean notion of the representation of corporate interests which defended aristocratic interests against the universalism of equal individual rights now appears to defend working class interests against an apparently more egalitarian, but perhaps in this context merely more bourgeois, principle. On the other hand, the tripartite formula seems in no way to inhibit the development of a more active and vigorous party outside Parliament, so necessary for any real democratization.

Party and Class

A final constitutional proposal which should be considered is the proposal, now shelved, for State financial subsidies to political parties. This measure would signify the ultimate failure of parties to maintain legitimacy and support from their erstwhile followings, and would amplify the strength of existing leaderships against innovation and

²¹ Michael Rustin, 'The New Left and the Present Crisis', *NLR* 121.

²² A case for work-place political organization was argued in my article above.

challenge from below or outside their ranks. While it seems this would be a further stage of democratic degeneration, it is perhaps little different in effect from many other hidden 'power subsidies' which major parties and other representative pressure groups already obtain from the State, in return for their subscription to the rules of conflict management. Among these one would include the first-past-the-post electoral system disfranchizing minority parties and would-be parties; the conventions of access to the mass media, favouring those already electorally represented against those who are not; the patronage bestowed by the State in appointments, salaries etc. on the representatives of large corporate organizations including parties, professional associations, industrial federations, and unions. In this sense one ought, perhaps, to regard the idea of paying actual grants to the existing dominant parties as no more than one further instrument of their incorporation into the State. It does of course have its tempting aspects for the Labour Party, in as much as State funding can be justified as offsetting the 'private' corporate funding available to the Conservative Party, and the Houghton Committee²³ which explored this device was set up by the Labour Government. In many ways the Labour Party has looked to the State to redress the advantages belonging to private capital—the welfare system and the vote itself are such means—and political subsidies could be seen as one further mechanism. The proposal was an outgrowth of the corporatist tendencies of the 1960's and 1970's, and indeed of the general British proclivity for rule through accommodations of incorporated elites. But this form of party funding would gravely attenuate the Labour Party's need to look to its actual and potential following for support. The present Conservative leadership's hostility to corporatist initiatives extends of course to this proposal and its refusal to pursue it is one of the factors which has now forced the Labour Party to try to revive its membership and to reinforce its link with the unions. Such a system seems tailor-made for a new Social Democratic or Centre Party, providing a mechanism for it to reproduce itself without need for any organized following, just as the media appear to be facilitating that form of political birth. Its introduction would constitute a centrist blow to the financial influence on political life of both organized labour and capital, and is likely to depend therefore on a party of the centre first achieving considerable electoral power.

It is clear that the nature of party organization in the political system has important implications for the resulting balance of class forces. Some of these implications have been indicated above in comments on particular constitutional proposals. It is through party constitutions and editorial mechanisms that the relationship between class forces and the State is established and maintained. It is therefore vitally important to understand these alternative conceptions in their implications for the balance of class forces, as well as from the point of view of abstract democratic procedure. Especially it is vital to do this if in the end one's purpose in the political process is to change the relative balance of power of classes, in favour of the working class and of

²³ Report of the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties (Houghton Committee) HMSO 1976.

groups associated with it. From this point of view the relative strength of party, as a mode of organization and power, is important, since it stands against other forms of power less subject to determination by working class interests.

Party organization is a means of political socialization, of making and confirming political commitments, and is in competition in exercising this function with other forms of influence, such as the mass media, the experience of work, consumption, and the family. Critics are justified in drawing attention to the problematic connection between claims to representativeness of the working class, by socialist activists, and their actual representativeness. In Marxist discourse this is recognised as the problem of 'substitutionism'. Nevertheless, where capital exercises direct and indirect influence on 'public opinion', especially through the mass media, it is equally naive to neglect to notice other forms of unrepresentativeness and of external influence. Party organisation at least establishes some substantial insulation of a section of the population from the influence of the dominant ideology, and an enclave in which alternative values and goals can be engendered and sustained. The effect of weakening that form of socialization, through attenuation of the power and functions of the party, is to increase the relative strength of other less socialist and indeed less working class-based influences. Representation of the 'average voter' by an individual turns out, in the absence of party, to mean greater representation of the influence of the media, and of various pressure groups. It is this fear of course which underlies much left wing hostility in party and unions to balloting—by enfranchizing the least committed and the least knowledgeable, it is felt largely to enfranchise the hostile media. This is not an argument against elections by ballot, but against the unrepresentative balance of the media. The weakness of working class interests in politics in the United States,²⁴ compared with Western Europe, and the correspondingly much lower level of voting, seems to be related to the much weaker American party system (and trade union organization), which is therefore less able to sustain alternative class values to those of the dominant capitalist interests. Pressure groups, including fundamentalist conservative organizations, with access to substantial private funding and highly organised techniques of opinion-management, have been recently filling this vacuum in the generation of issues, ideas, and pressures in the USA with considerable effect.

One general comment one can make on recent proposals therefore is that the personalization of politics, around the choices between alternative charisma-bearing leaders, is a substitute for the collective determination of political alternatives, and in this society would be likely to erode class differentiation and thus working class political autonomy. Michels²⁵ and his successors have amply described the effects of the 'iron law of oligarchy' in political parties in bringing about the accommodation of the working class to dominant class interests. But it is possible also to have leader domination instead of,

²⁴ The American history is most usefully discussed in Mike Davis, 'Why the U.S. Working Class is Different' (NLR 123) and 'The Legacy of the CIO' (NLR 124)

²⁵ Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, London (reprinted) 1966.

or at the expense of, party organisation and this is likely to be—has already been—an even more rapid means of abandoning political goals that are specific to the working class.

More specifically, one can suggest differential consequences of the various constitutional proposals that have been made from the Right. The denial of validity to any system of party nomination of candidates or determination of policy, or the assertion of the absolute autonomy of the parliamentary party, is a fundamental attack on collectivist decision-making procedures. The recommendation to enfranchise all Labour voters through a primary system would again increase the influence of individual candidates, and would tend to fragment and divide parties as similar arrangements do in the United States. Socialists observing the present condition of the Democrats in the United States could hardly regard that political system as a model to be followed, and that proposal also has few serious advocates in the Labour Party here.

The Scope for Ballotting

However, the proposal to give Labour Party members a vote in the election of leaders or candidates, and the use of ballotting in other party decisions, is more widely supported, and has certain evident merits. The proposal has also gathered support very quickly, and is likely to be tested out further, hopefully in practice. By itself, as an *alternative* to tripartism, and the numerical predominance of union representation, this would have been a very drastic change, likely to lead to unpredictable polarization and conflict as factions contended for the majority. The opportunity would have been available to either side to win more decisive control than is now available, given the removal of the 'ballasting' role of the trade unions.²⁶ Most seriously, from the point of view of working class political interests, the loss of an integral relationship between political party and trade unions would be an entire disaster, and it seems likely that Britain would then come to reproduce the political divisions on the left of France and Italy, in some form, and perhaps some aspects of the political fragmentation of the left in the United States as well. It is fortunate that this proposal has not been adopted; it seems that it could only be supported by those who are essentially hostile to the role of trade unions and their representation of working class interests.

The more modest measure of introducing voting by ballot for Labour Party members—for example in the nomination of an electoral college or the selection of candidates—in the existing framework of trade union and other representation in the Labour Party, has a more positive potential, and we here return to this idea from our earlier discussion. Ballots would carry the risk of merely plebiscitary appeals to a membership influenced far more by mass media than by face-to-

²⁶ A 'ballasting' role of 40% may however be regarded as threatening sea-worthiness, in contrast to the more equitable and rational nxc formula.

face discussion. It would reduce the automatic weight given to political activists merely by virtue of their commitment and participation. On the other hand, it would constrain activists to ensure that their initiatives are widely supported by their membership. It would provide a positive reason for recruitment, where the present system of decision-making actually provides incentives not to recruit, since additional members may mean that power has to be shared or lost. And voting by ballot would offer individual members an appropriate political power, properly less than is obtained by regular participation in meetings, but equivalent to that which is conferred by the national electoral system. While it is essential to preserve the direct representation of trade unions, there are arguments for the use of ballots in the unions too, as a means of increasing political participation and awareness. It is to be hoped that those constituency parties or unions who explore the use of more participatory methods will find that they gain in membership and political strength as a result.

It would remain to be determined which decisions should be made by ballot, and which by deliberative procedures, and there are powerful arguments for retaining the participatory mode of decision-making by elected delegates on most matters. But it seems that some enfranchisement of the whole membership is also appropriate, as an indication that the party believes in its capacity to represent the working class and the majority of the population, and is willing to expose itself regularly, by its own choice, to the vote of all those who commit themselves to join it.

The principal constitutional proposals from the Left, for membership participation in the major decisions regarding the election Manifesto, the selection of candidates, and the election of the party leader, involve a collectivist conception of the political party which my argument strongly supports. In this respect the changes made in the Party Constitution by the 1980 Conference are positive, even though they may have the effect more of maintaining an existing tripartite balance of power than of radically changing anything. The criticisms to be made of the Left's position, aside from the issue of balloting discussed above, are not primarily constitutional. They rather arise from the very restricted conception of party functions which the Left shares with the Labour Right, and which has characterized the Labour Party since its inception as an electoralist, parliamentarist party. It is unlikely that, without some change in the political functions and actual modes of activity of the Labour Party, new constitutional devices will by themselves avail very much. There is a disposition for the Left to define its objective as simply to increase its power relative to other factions and tendencies within the existing apparatus, and to see constitutional change as a means to this end. But more important than this is to increase the influence of the Left, and of the Labour Party as a whole, within the country, and this cannot be transformed by internal power struggles alone. It is to this problem that we now turn.

The Party as a Modality of Power

There has developed, in recent years, a substantial critique of the

parliamentarism²⁷ of the Labour Party in Britain. This has suggested that the idea of capturing power through the ballot box is an illusion. Elected governments of the left, it is argued, find themselves surrounded by such a panoply of power and constraint, from capital, from the State administration or civil service, and latently from the armed forces and the police, that no radical transformation of property and power relations could possibly be undertaken on this basis alone. Furthermore the effects on the Labour Party of this electoral preoccupation are exceptionally limiting, confining activity to the increasingly unattractive and even perhaps only marginally useful chores of maintaining an electoral machine in an era of television, and to the discussion of resolutions in small groups. This view of the limited value of electoral party work has encouraged the much more vigorous development of issue campaigns and pressure groups, in to which most of the energy of the left has gone for the past twenty-five years.

At the same time as electoralism has been under attack in Britain, so the monopolistic and authoritarian role of Communist Parties in one-party systems has been criticised, not least by the members of Western Communist Parties such as the PCI. There has been some accommodation by these Parties, in the tendency known as 'Euro-Communism'²⁸ towards the electoralist pluralism of social democratic thinking. It has been suggested that these developments are in fact moving some Western Communist Parties in the direction of classical social democracy. While in Britain the idea of the 'Leninist' party (or would-be party) has been one of the most vigorously pursued models alternative to the parliamentarism of the Labour Party, these various Leninist groupings have not succeeded in achieving more than a catalytic and fringe role, and especially not in relation to the organized working class movement. There are indications that this vanguardist position has now become subject to a more searching intellectual and practical critique from the left, in the *Beyond the Fragments*²⁹ pamphlet for example.

These various critiques, however, leave a considerable vacuum so far as positive organisational ideas are concerned. Yet without some coherent conception of political organization, it is unlikely that major political advances by the working class movement will be possible. Even the more active campaigning style which the Foot leadership seems likely to inaugurate, and the radical mood likely to be engendered by severe unemployment, inequalities, and attacks on the public sector, will be dissipated if and when Labour returns to office if its mobilization is as ephemeral, ill-organized and intellectually dependent on small Fabian coteries, as in the past. Some consideration of the role of party in bringing about radical changes is now urgently necessary, especially as there now seems more likelihood of achieving some fundamental reconsideration of structure and functions in the Labour Party than at any time since the War. The abstention by many

²⁷ Following for example Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism*, London 1961, and *The State in Capitalist Society* London 1969, and Tom Nairn, op. cit.

²⁸ See for example, K. Middlemas, *Power and the Party*, London 1980, and C. Boggs and D. Plotke (eds.), *The Politics of Euro-Communism*, London 1980.

²⁹ S. Rowbotham, L. Segal H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments*, London 1980.

of the most active socialists in recent years from any but the most passive role in the major British party of the working class may indeed have been at a great cost, entirely understandable though the countless individual decisions to seek a more intellectually and practically vital politics have been. The vigour and innovativeness of the many pressure groups and campaigns of the left has not, in the end, compensated for the gross weaknesses of the major political vehicle of working class interests. The authenticities of personally meaningful politics can be obtained at a high political price, if the war is meanwhile lost through the dispersion and diversion of the various potential allies of socialist change to their different local battles.³⁰

Goran Therborn³¹ has made a most useful contribution to this debate, in drawing attention to the different ways in which power is exercised in modern societies. In an analysis that draws partly on the work of Weber, he distinguishes between bureaucratic, managerial and cadre organization. The chief modalities of power in capitalist societies are those of bureaucracy—subordination under rules in Simmel's and Weber's terms—and managerial power, where those in command have a wider scope to make instrumental decisions, on market or technical criteria, designed to achieve given strategic ends, than those in classical bureaucracies. There is also the form of power expressed through the impersonal disciplines of the market, to which even public organizations have been increasingly exposed since the 'monetarist' phase of the last Labour Government. Therborn defines cadre power, on the other hand, as power based on the mobilisation of a following by a political (or, we might add, trade union) leadership, and this depends on the ability to win and maintain popular support. Therborn takes a more understanding and, in the end, positive view of the cadre power located in regimes dominated by Communist Parties than I think is correct, though he is certainly right in recognizing that all forms of power, and not only this one, have their costs from the point of view of those subjected to them. The fact that 'cadre regimes' in Eastern Europe have secured, and do defend, the social ownership of the means of production, and to some degree do represent and defend relative working class interests against those of other classes,³² certainly needs to be weighed in the consideration of the costs and benefits of alternative party forms. An automatic rejection of this form of organization, on the basis of contrasting models of the 'totalitarian' and 'democratic' party has served mainly to constrain and inhibit the social democratic parties to the most exclusively parliamentarist preoccupations. It is notable that in parliamentary and pluralist environments, such as Italy, Communist Parties through their greater immunity from this liberal anti-totalitarianism and their greater commitment to the party as a mobilizing agency, have retained a much more pervasive social and

³⁰ Labour Party activities will, on the other hand, have to become more responsive to people's interests and talents if participation in them is to grow.

³¹ G. Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, nla London 1978.

³² Evidence for this view is given in Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order*, Macgibbon and Kee, 1971. Whether this relative advantage over other social classes compensates for absolute disadvantages is another issue. Parkin is not noted for his sympathy for Marxist perspectives, however. The problem of bureaucratic privilege is also, obviously, acute.

cultural life than any socialist party in the West appears to have done.³³ A more objective consideration of the consequences of different forms of State and party organisation would serve socialist purposes better than retention of the framework of Cold War liberalism in which much of the discussion of parties has been formed. The development of 'Euro-Communism' has created the possibility of lessons being learned by Western socialists about the limitations of their party structures, as well as the more obvious liberal lessons which are continually pressed in the other direction.

The problem of Labourism has been that it has sought the capture of power through the State apparatus, but no fundamental change in the State apparatus it wishes to capture. Consequently, those subjected to the reforms of Labour Governments have found the particular power relations to which they are subject, whether at the hands of the agencies of central and local government, or of publicly owned enterprises, substantially unmodified. Reforming governments have achieved changes in social provision, a limited redistribution of resources, and an enhancement of the role of State power vis-a-vis market power. But they have not achieved many changes in the relation of citizens to the apparatus of decision-making and power itself. The government sector is generally more rule-governed in its management strategies than private capital, and has conferred greater bargaining rights on its employees and their trade unions. Until the recent period of acute financial pressure the same could be said of nationalized industries. But the explanation of this is that the adversary relations between State employer and organized Labour have mostly been conducted on more equal terms in public enterprises, not that employees are given more rights of self-determining collective ownership or control. An element of official paternalism is also practised by State agencies, again perhaps preferable from the employees' point of view to the narrow instrumentalism of the capitalist employer, but still far short of participatory rights. Recently these differences between public and private sectors has been eroded, by the greater subjection, from the monetarist phase of the Callaghan-Healey government onwards, of public organizations to market disciplines. Labour has in general achieved very little in changing the relation of citizens to the decision-making process, despite what it has done for their welfare. It has itself been a substitutionist party, offering its diminished organisation and its feeble grip on the State apparatus as the unique vehicle of working class power.

I have suggested elsewhere³⁴ that this state of affairs is sustained ideologically by the dominant idea of the individual subject, and by the emptiness and marginality in this society of notions of collective sub-

³³ In D.L.M. Blackmer and S. Tarrow (eds.) *Communism in Italy and France*, Princeton 1975, there is interesting evidence (for example in the paper by Robert Putnam) of the natural and unforced way in which Italian Communist Party politicians acknowledge the party and not their elected office as their principal loyalty. Such collective commitment clearly emerges from a long-established way of life in the PCI, and it would be a mistake to suppose one could manufacture such loyalties simply by force in the Labour Party.

³⁴ In Michael Rustin, 'The Politics of Workers Plans', *Politics and Power* 2, London 1980.

jectivity and deliberation. The stress on liberal political philosophy on 'negative freedom', freedom from unjustified interference, in contrast to the 'positive freedom' of self-realization through social membership and participation is an influential intellectual underpinning of this position. The society confers and safeguards individual rights—to exchange in the market, to vote, to associate and speak freely, to be subject to law and to have access to juridical procedures in defence of individual rights. But equality of membership and the right of determination over institutions is confined largely to the sphere of the family (leaving aside inequalities of gender and generation), to voluntary association, and to the spheres of political and trade union organization where, however, these collective rights are qualified by many bureaucratic and oligarchic practices. Elsewhere, power goes in proportion to property ownership (capitalist business), or to functional position. Rather few organisations, these often of the most advanced professional kind where interdependence of skills and the necessity for voluntary commitment make a democratic ethos functional, provide the experience of collective responsibility and control for employees or clients. There has remained however a continuing utopian vision of a democratic, libertarian, and self-active socialism. Consensual, co-operative organization is also a point of affinity between this utopian tradition and aspects of the culture of some 'new middle class' occupations and life-styles, as it has been at least since the time of William Morris.

The political party has not seemed to many a useful instrument for achieving 'workers control' or other forms of direct democracy. The party seems of its nature to gather up rather than to disseminate power. Especially in Britain, where the available party traditions, from that of the Labour Party leftwards, have tended to be centralist and statist in character, libertarians and syndicalists have tended to work outside and even against party, rather than through it. But this abstention from party, while it has produced much self-active community and cultural life, has also weakened the institution—the political party—which may be most critical for achieving the major changes in power relations on which participatory democracy must depend.

The Poverty of Labourism

This situation was characterized in a somewhat different way by Gramsci,³⁵ in his use of the distinction between civil society and the State, to describe both different modes of class rule, and also different strategies of resistance to it. On this model, there is a distinction between struggle through the institutions of civil society, and the capture of the State apparatus. Parliamentary socialism is clearly pre-occupied largely with the latter. This has the effect of attenuating and impoverishing struggles over the nature of social institutions as they are specifically experienced and lived. It also has its self-destructive and self-limiting costs for the electoral struggle for the State, since the base of informed support for reforms becomes narrow, and the coalescence

³⁵ A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith, London 1971.

of specific issues on which a majority for radical change depends, is inhibited. In a mode of thinking which mirrors the prevailing individualist ideology of the whole society, the methods of the social survey become the principal means of predicting and synthesizing putative majorities, aggregating the attitudes of masses of individuals. Parties do this rather than creating and responding to collective, deliberative expressions of political goals. This methodology, with its characteristic reliance on indirect and 'technically designed' methods of mass communication, succeeds in breaking up and homogenizing the different social identities—occupational, cultural, local—which a complex society should respect as the basis for political choice. Especially this process is harmful to the construction of a radical coalition in a society as socially and generationally differentiated as this one. Where a society does not share much in the way of a common experience or definition of events (in contrast to the domestic experience of war, for example), the artifact of 'commonness' produced by mass communicators, or politicians operating as such, is likely to be an insubstantial one, not able to bring about deep or lasting commitments. Such indeed appears to be the case when one considers the recent volatility and decline of party political loyalties.

In face of the experience of relative prosperity, and the changes in class cultures which this brought about, the Labour Party found itself abandoning its previously predominant orientation towards the 'working class', in favour of a more neutral and unspecific rhetoric of modernization and social justice. While the problem of the breakdown of old social identities was real, the solution was inadequate, and avoided the real tasks of representing a more differentiated complex of social identities. The preoccupation in some Marxist writing with the complexities of the modern class structure, and with the problems of constructing broad class alliances, is just as relevant to the problems of social democracy in Britain. I have argued elsewhere³⁶ that the confinement of the Labour Party (and the wider electoral process) to the exclusive representation, at a political level, of local constituencies and branches, compounds this problem, since it provides no form of representation for other differentiating forms of social membership and identity, such as occupations. The representation of trade unions within the party structure only partially compensates for this, given their much less political practice.

A further factor in this weakness is the intellectually and culturally impoverished character of the Labour Party, hitherto lacking a theoretical journal, lacking any penumbra of artistic activity, or the vigorous local and community culture represented by the festivals of the Italian or French Communist Parties. While the strand represented by the Fabian tradition does provide some intellectual and programmatic muscle, its elitist character, and the extreme restriction of access of intellectuals to Labour's policy-making process, even in opposition and virtually totally in Government, reduces to a low level the possibilities of a theoretical articulation of collective definitions and

³⁶ In M. Rustin 'The New Left and the Present Crisis', *NLS* 121.

interests. The ideological offensive has therefore for years been maintained, in British politics, by the Right and Centre.

These issues would hardly be worth rehearsing, if it were not that some widespread recognition of these problems has recently become evident within the Labour Party itself. The constitutional debates discussed above represent a rather formalistic but nevertheless important assertion of the primacy of the party, as a collectivity, over its parliamentary representation. But the concern over membership and organizational vitality, and related initiatives in regard to workplace branches and the establishment of a theoretical journal, indicate the possibility that considerable development in the composition and activity of the party might now be possible. Especially this is so given the large number of trade unionists, socialists and radicals who could be attracted to the party by the combination of the experience of the present Tory administration, and the existence of a Labour leadership with some belief in extra-parliamentary as well as parliamentary opposition.

These various developments should all be strongly supported. In addition to the workplace political representation already agreed in principle by the Labour Party, it would be desirable that socialist associations of other kinds—on the model of the Socialist Medical Association, the Socialist Environmental Association, and the Socialist Educational Association—should be encouraged, both as national, but also as locally represented, groupings. They have an intellectual and programmatic importance out of proportion to their numbers. There might be a case for the formation of a more generic and broad Socialist Society, committed to socialist educational and programmatic work. This might have the aim of making possible a more collective and less fragmented political role for intellectuals within and outside the Labour Party than present structures now allow.

The Labour Party should seek to represent those different interests and social constituencies that can share socialist aims by some federal means. There is the problem that such systems of multiple representation might create plural votes for those members who are active in several settings. But this is an acceptable anomaly, giving reasonable recognition to different social identities and collectivities where individuals are active in different settings. And its effects in unequally weighting the votes of different individuals would be many times outweighed if at the same time *all* members were given balloted votes on crucial questions. The absence of the ballot is now a much more centralizing distortion of relative power in favour of the activist than plural representation through different kinds of branch would be.

The objectives of this more pluralistic structure would be to deepen the representativeness and social roots of the Party. It would have electoral, recruiting and financial purposes, in this way. It would also aim to open up the process of policy-formation, allowing access to discussion and decision in virtue of members' shared experience and expertise—as miners, as health workers, as women, or as teachers—where the present systems of delegation and representation effectively cut these particular social experiences out of the political process. The

absence of such informed, combative constituencies for reforms in particular sectors fatally weakens the thrust behind them, and leaves governments in the end powerless against the superior mobilization, sanctions, intellectual argument, and publicity of the opponents of change. The only way that socialist governments can outmatch resistance to changes from the state apparatus, from the mass media, and from business and professional organizations, is through the organization of its own informed political support, probably through the agency of party. Finally, and most important, it would make it possible for the party to contest for power on behalf of those it represents, in institutional settings other than those of the State. Parties are power-seeking institutions, concerned over the goals and ends of social action, not only with instrumental and material interests. The objective of a party broadened in the way proposed should be to seek both the formal goal of more democratic participation in various kinds of institution, from the school to the pension fund, and specific 'political' goals (for example, better preventive health care within a hospital service) within such institutions.

In Defence of Socialist Politics

There are counter-arguments, and possible objections, to this conception. One objection is that the political party is already in long-term decline as an institution, chiefly because of the supercession of direct face-to-face communication by the mass media, and because of a decline in the salience of parliamentary political decision-making as such, against the power of bureaucratic, technocratic and corporate power. It seems likely however that the decline of recent years is more the product of affluence, consensus, and political disillusion³⁷ than of any long-run technical developments in communication, some of which (cheaper printing, for example) might help rather than harm autonomous, community or work-based organizations.

A second objection is that parties are incorrigibly centralist. The pursuit of decentralized power, of workers' self-management and collective ownership, cannot on this view be pursued by a party which would impose its own centralized authority on members as it appears to do even in the most liberal Communist societies. But the problem is that without a strong instrument of political mobilization and pressure, there seems no way of breaking down the powers of capital ownership and bureaucracy: there appears to be no reason whatever to think it will merely dissolve away.

A third objection is anti-totalitarian, that such a strengthening of party is likely to lead, if it is successful in its political objectives, to party monopoly, and to the pathologies of unconstrained power and

³⁷ The disenchantment brought about the failures of Labour Governments under right-wing domination then provide further self-fulfilling arguments for loosening the constraints of party, whose membership of course declines in these conditions. The fact that the *performance* of conservative Labour Governments has lost votes is not however quite the same thing as saying that more left-wing *programmes* would win them. This would depend on the political context, and the campaign, in which they were presented.

privilege which have so damaged the practice and reputation of socialism in Eastern Europe. It doesn't seem evident that in starting from electoral pluralism, and seeking changes in the dominant balance of class forces rather than class dictatorship, any such outcome is necessary. What does make such an outcome more likely is the Cold War itself, and its removal of the political space within which experiments in combining different forms of power, and different relations of individual and collective rights, might be made. Starting from Western liberal traditions, and without the forced intervention of military power or economic catastrophe, there is no reason why changes in class relations, through the agency of parties, could not be accomplished without undue costs to political and cultural freedoms. Furthermore, the more diversified and inclusive of different social groups and interest were a party to be, the more likely it might be to reflect such differentiation in its activities. Monolithic centralism is not the only possible form of party organization and culture.

A fourth objection is a more realistic one. The more a party of the left tried to strengthen its organization, and seeks to contest new areas of institutional decision-making, the more that parties of the right would respond by comparable organization and struggle. This process of dialectical response from the right to organizational innovations begun on the left has been seen in the work of pressure groups and even in the industrial action of very conservative occupational interests, such as the consultants and prison officers. In other European societies, where party is a stronger constituting element of social relations, such a ballance can be seen in which stronger left wing parties than in Britain are matched by right wing or centre parties that are reciprocally stronger. Religious affiliation, in Holland for example, can similarly serve as a stronger and more pervasive axis of power within societies. There are undoubtedly costs in such polarization and contestation. Some of the tolerance of British social life stems from the elimination of overt political considerations from decisions and even customary social conversation, and from insistence on a notion of political neutrality in many fields. In academic institutions in Britain, for example, political membership is not usually a criterion of professional advance; in some European university systems it often is. One's approval or otherwise of such an enhancement of 'political', as opposed to 'technical', values by no means necessarily depends on whether one's own political tendency would do well out of such a change. There are always choices to be made between political and countervailing value systems—especially in regard to the values in particular fields of activity (history or medicine for example) which are shared by participants of different political conviction—and the advocacy of a stronger intrusion of the political in British life doesn't remove the need for particular judgements about its appropriateness.

One might propose a more general principle for defining the limits of the exercise of political power. This uses the distinction between ends and means, legislation and execution, but applied not only, as it now is, to the field of State administration, but to the activities of lower-level institutions such as enterprises, schools and health services that one would wish to see subject to political choices. It is reasonable that

the goals and strategies of such institutions should be determined by open debate and by contested alternative plans and proposals. Parties are appropriate instruments for organizing and clarifying the alternatives in such deliberations, though, in small-scale and consensual institutions, divisions of opinion may well not need to be crystallized in terms of formal party affiliation, even though these affinities may well be informal influences. But particular decisions about the treatment of individuals, or in the solution of technical, functional problems, or to select and promote personnel, could properly be agreed to be outside 'politics', by the consensus of contending parties, once general principles governing such decisions had been decided. What is suggested is the confining of political organization to the determination of policies, in different settings, and the consensual neutralisation of 'executive', technical and particularistic decisions from political contestation. This separation would do much to avoid the oppressiveness of actual 'cadre regimes', and would also prevent the undue imposition of political values on areas of technical, scientific, cultural, and human decision to which they may have in practice little to contribute. The assertion of the primacy of political considerations can be the ideological basis for a one-dimensional hierarchy of power and values as oppressive as the one-dimensionality of the market. The distinction between decisions about goals, and the practical technologies of implementation, allows 'cadre organisation' to do what it can and should do, namely win and maintain consensual or majority support for social goals, while not allowing it the means of particularistic oppression.

But for all the potential costs one can see, there seems to be no socialist progress possible without the creation of stronger political forms, capable of widely challenging for power, of proposing changed goals and priorities for institutions, and of aiming to democratize and disseminate authority more consensually and equally in society. Some may argue that such political forms should not, or practically cannot, be those principally of the party. Why not, some will say, a variety of organizational and political forms, why not a plurality of institutions and campaigns each working locally for the contesting and dismantling of class and bureaucratic powers, perhaps with only some nominal or catalytic concentration in an elected government? Such a view seems often to imply some 'natural', technologically-generated process of post-industrial decentralization and deconcentration. There seems little evidence for this view of benign ecological progress at the present, and it is more plausible to think that power has to be won, by argument and consent to be sure, but still through various forms of conflict and contest. Classical socialist theory, in its more social democratic as well as Leninist versions, has always assumed the centrality of the party. It might be as well to explore the hypothesis that these theorists were right in this, and to try to bring about a theory and practice of that classical view that is adequate to present conditions.

It is surprising to find, considering its history and the weight of socialist critique against it, that the Labour Party now offers the most urgent and significant opportunity for a generation for making this attempt.

'Teachers, Writers, Celebrities': Intelligentsias and Their Histories

The appearance of Régis Debray's *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France* was a major cultural event in France.¹ Critical reaction was instant and passionate; the book was soon a talking-point and—on a scale appropriate to a book of its kind—a best-seller. But if the public evidence pointed straightforwardly to literary success, the occasion itself was nonetheless a complex one. *Le Pouvoir intellectuel* was an analysis of French culture and its intellectuals that blended familiar themes with preoccupations of a not at all familiar, even antithetical kind. Philosophical and theoretical at one end of its discursive range, at the other it immersed itself in the mundane affairs of its subject, freely naming institutions and individuals, restaurants and bars. It was also a political intervention, made after the emergence of the New Philosophers and the defeat of the Union of the Left, and intended as an explanation of the cultural mechanism that had been at work in these linked events. The complexities of the work were deepened further by the career of the author: Debray was quite open about his own past associations with the institutions and milieux that he now attacked, and was too lucid not

to anticipate the role of his personal publicity-value in stimulating response to his book.

The English translation appears in very different conditions; some of the issues that engaged French readers may recede now, and will perhaps be replaced by others. At all events, it is in the nature of the case that some spontaneous perceptual re-ordering will occur. It may be useful, then, to discuss some contexts and perspectives of reading, both 'original' and 'acquired', that seem appropriate to *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities*. These notes will attempt first to situate it in the history of French writing about intellectuals, and in relation to other relevant traditions; then to examine the historical specificity of the French intelligentsia and to suggest some pertinent comparisons and contrasts with Britain and the United States, paying particular attention to the phenomenon of 'intellectual corporatism';² and finally to look again at the complex cultural make-up of the book.

The French Tradition

'Le clerc ne trahit jamais.' Debray's studied declaration at once evokes and challenges a whole tradition of intellectual self-reflection. The homeland of this tradition is France, and its inception, in its modern form at least, may be dated from the appearance of Julien Benda's *La Trahison des clercs* in 1927. The cultural matrix of Benda's book was liberal humanism, its politics, amidst the crisis of post-war Europe, an unworldly rejection of all national particularism or social partisanship in the name of the disinterested service of humanity as a whole. *La Trahison des clercs* is internationally significant as a classic statement of this outlook; its added significance in France is that it laid down the protocols of a distinctive cultural *occasion* that was to recur in subsequent crises and under the auspices of radically contrasting positions.

Benda's symbolic counterpart between the wars was Paul Nizan, whose *Les Chiens de garde* (1932) was one Communist intellectual's 'great-minded harangue' (Debray) against the political quietism of academic philosophy. Some fifteen years later, after the Liberation, Nizan's friend Sartre launched *Les Temps Modernes* with a declaration of intellectual commitment, and wrote *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* to demonstrate that the writer was, *qua* writer, necessarily on the left. The antitype, in the Cold War fifties, was Raymond Aron's *L'Opium des intellectuels*. May 1968 and its aftermath saw a great proliferation of such documents, of which Sartre's 1970 interview 'l'Ami du peuple' and the Godard-Gorin film *Tout va bien* are among the better-known instances. The confusions and disappointments, the reversals and the desertions of the later seventies have proved no less conducive to this traditional activity than the antithetical conditions of ten years ago. The 'bad

¹ Paris 1979. The English translation, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities*, is published by Verso Editions and NLA in the current season.

² 'Intellectual corporatism' arises when an ideology of collective unity and independence takes hold in a given intelligentsia or segment of it. 'Corporatism' as intended here differs from conventional Gramscian usage in that it does not imply the 'hegemonic' posture as its opposite.

objects' of the Parisian high intelligentsia may vary (approximately, from Power to the Gulag to the Devil—and back) but an unassimilable 'plebeian' stance is widely advocated as appropriate to the age. And here, now, in Debray's book, is another—oppositely intended—challenge.

This tradition, then, is not confined to any particular political or intellectual position; it has been a prominent and constant theme in the *national culture* of twentieth-century France. This consideration is decisive for any attempt to understand the phenomenon. For the moment, however, it is more pertinent to note a related, 'intrinsic' feature of the tradition: in spite of the wide variety of its tributaries, it has retained a marked discursive coherence. It has characteristically been an *ethics* (or, in the twin classical sense, a 'politics') of intellectual life. Benda's text was patently and proudly a work of moral prescription founded on an ontology of the intellectual as social being. Nizan's was structurally similar, even if the imperatives were now political and the ground of being was history as class struggle. The socialist politics of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* were premised on the existentialist ethics of Sartre's technical philosophy, the intermediary being an aesthetic conception of the novel as a 'pact of freedoms'.³ Rationalist, phenomenological or dialectical-materialist, liberal or socialist, these and kindred writings sustained a common discourse whose basic character was always (not only or even principally in the pejorative sense) *moralist*.

Teachers, Writers, Celebrities lies uneasily among its predecessors, for the main novelty of the book is precisely its practical challenge to moralism and the analytic options and occlusions characteristic of it. It represents, in fact, a major break in the tradition. Ethics is displaced here by politics, ontology by history and sociology. Benda invoked the changeless truth of a calling and prescribed its functions accordingly; Debray seeks to analyse the formation and re-formation of a determinate occupational bloc. Sartre's investigation of the relations between intellectuals and their audience concluded that writing was constitutionally leftist, that the vocation of writer was a political fatality; Debray's object, by contrast, is to discover the structured tendencies of intellectual behaviour in successive cultural production-systems and to show how these dictate the posture of the intelligentsia in given political situations. The 'mediological' discourse so initiated is markedly more historical, markedly more materialist than anything in its parent tradition.

Indeed, the novelty of the book remains clear in international comparison. When Debray complains that France is the 'political paradise' of the intelligentsia but the 'purgatory' of its analysts, he does too much justice to the implied national contrasts. More precisely, he underestimates the extent to which the selfsame or similar, essentially philosophico-literary discourse on 'the clerisy' permeates the cultures of the advanced capitalist world, not excepting the younger, scientific

³ See Ronald Aronson, *Jean-Paul Sartre—Philosophy in the World*, London 1980, pp. 122–42.

disciplines that claim to have superseded it. Such notions are active in the work of Parsons, for example, and just as clearly in that of Gramsci—whose nearly complete isolation, as a Marxist, in this field of theory and research tells its own tale.⁴ Whether Debray himself has entirely settled accounts with this 'erstwhile philosophical consciousness' is a consideration that will be taken up. But the main emphasis should fall on the originality of his book. Precedents may be cited for its various themes and analytic strategies—its combination of theoretical argument and concrete analysis, the historical sketch of the French intelligentsia that forms the centre of the book, the insistence on the specific economics of culture, and, related to this, the systematic integration of statistical with more conventional ('qualitative') kinds of evidence. What is novel here is the combination, and the purpose that it is designed to serve. No one, Marxist or other, has made so concerted an attempt to analyse what might be called, in Marx's terms, the 'social being' of 'social consciousness', the intelligentsia as a social category at work, in one of its major modern incarnations. By this alone, Debray's book sets a standard for future research.

Debray and Cultural Criticism

That is one context in which to read *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities*. But certain others, two in particular, will probably hold greater significance for an English-language audience.

The first of these is Frankfurt Marxism. Debray's history of the French intelligentsia is conceived in the form of a study of the development of the national cultural apparatuses—the schools and universities, publishing, the press, radio and television. It is an exercise in 'mediology', and much of its argumentation pertains not so much to intellectuals as to the laws of motion of the institutions in and by which they are deployed. Two processes are given analytic priority. The first, economic process is that of the absorption of cultural production into general commodity production, in an era when the capitalist economy is said itself to be undergoing an inner transformation, the relative determining powers of production and distribution being switched to the advantage of the latter. The second, technical process involves the development of the forces of cultural production and the institutional rearrangements induced by it. The analytic object so constituted is akin to what the Frankfurt tradition called 'the culture industry'; and the substance of the analysis is no less redolent of Critical Theory, above all in its historical pessimism.⁵ Debray may not altogether suppress the distinction between the technical resources of the media and the social relations within which they are utilized, but he denies emphatically that it underwrites the possibility of cultural emancipation. The electronic media are bringing forth a culture in keeping with their own

⁴ See Parson's contribution to Philip Rieff, ed., *On Intellectuals*, New York 1969; and Gramsci's discussion of 'traditional intellectuals', which effectively adopts the self-image of intellectual corporatism ('The Formation of the Intellectuals', Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, ed., Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London 1971, pp. 5-14).

⁵ See, for example, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London 1979.

unalterable nature, he argues. The modern culture industry falls under one historical law and one only: the law of increasing symbolic immiseration' in obedience to which the criterion of intrinsic worth is displaced by that of 'mediatic surface', the complexity of the message is sacrificed to the volume of its reception, cultural labour is deskilled and its products quality-controlled to ensure the optimal incidence of sensation. A society whose 'high intellectuals' reserve their main energies for appearances on Friday-night television, Debray maintains, is in truth a 'mediocracy'. 'The darkest spot in modern society is a small luminous screen.'

These echoes of the Frankfurt School are notable enough in a writer of Althusserian and Leninist formation. But such arguments stir stronger, more familiar and far more improbable associations. For many of the topics and themes of his book, and even, in places, its tones and cultural accents, were anticipated fifty years ago in the early writings of F. R. and Q. D. Leavis. The former's *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* and the latter's *Fiction and the Reading Public* showed the same preoccupation with the contemporary economic reorganization of culture that now motivates Debray (though he naturally thinks of the economy as capitalist, a specification that the Leavises thought secondary in the essentially monolithic conditions of 'industrialism').⁶ 'Standardization and levelling down' was their conventional shorthand for the same tendencies that Debray now describes as inherent in 'mediocratic' culture. His acid accounts of intellectual life in the Latin Quarter and Montparnasse recall the Leavises' attacks on the 'coteries' of metropolitan London. His analysis of the circuits of influence and advantage, in reviewing and promotion, is parallel to theirs. For Bernard-Henri Lévy, actor-manager of the New Philosophy, read (say) Michael Roberts, the strategist of the *New Signatures* and *New Country* anthologies in the early thirties. For Pivot, the tele-journalist with the power of life and death over the season's new titles, read Arnold Bennett, the star reviewer of the London *Evening Standard*. In temper too there is a striking similarity. Cool and concentrated, but then suddenly mocking, indignant or openly angry, both the Leavises and Debray here display a tense combination of fatalism and defiance. Debray might well cite, as he has done in the past, Gramsci's famous borrowing, 'pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will',⁷ for this motto registers the stress at the heart of his book, the same stress that was defined in the perhaps more lucid Leavisian phrase, 'desperate optimism': the stress of a cultural voluntarism armed only with its conscience and always-already-defeated, if its own strategic estimates are really to be believed.

This is not to say that Debray's mediology is 'really' a belated, stray variant of *Kulturkritik*. The theoretical constitution of the book will prompt many questions, but these are best posed in the light of prior and more widely applicable historical questions. How should we regard this improbable confluence of English cultural criticism and

⁶ Cambridge 1932 and London 1932 respectively.

⁷ 'Schema for a Study of Gramsci', *Prison Writings*, Harmondsworth 1975, pp. 161-66.

French Marxism, and what does it suggest about Debray's relationship with the national history that he discusses? But first, is there anything further to be said about the specificity of the French case, or by way of pertinent contrast, about the differing cases of England and the United States?

The Intelligentsia: Three Cases

Debray distinguishes three 'cycles' in the past century of French intellectual history: the academic, which he dates from 1880 to 1930; that of publishing (1920-1960); and the mediatic, initiated in 1968 and still in its ascendant phase. These chronological periods delimit not life-spans but hegemonies. Just as the university displaced the Church in the last years of the nineteenth century, so in the inter-war years publishing and its culture displaced the university milieu, reorganizing the latter in a subaltern position. Then, in the 1960s, the press and broadcasting apparatuses restructured both, creating a pyramidal culture in which a mediatic elite became paramount over a subordinate publishing sector and an abject educational system. There was a symbolic succession from Alain to Gide to Glucksmann.

This was not, it need hardly be said, the common destiny of the West. But, to the extent that it was rather a distinctive French experience, general theses concerning the development of capitalist commerce and of communications technology cannot fully explain it: by definition blind to national variation, they are at once too much and too little. Other elements besides these were involved in shaping this distinctive historical passage.

The so-called 'second industrial revolution' came very late in France, and when it did arrive was correspondingly intensified in its rhythms and effects. The trustification and technical rationalization of industry, the introduction of scientific 'research and development', the production of machines by means of machines and the opening up of the mass market had begun in the United States at the end of the 1890s, and by the end of the First World War had already largely transformed the American urban economy—the baptism of Ford's assembly-line in 1915 symbolized the start of the new era. Over the same period, the multiple conjunctions of commercial pressure and opportunity with technological innovation were responsible for a whole complex of culturally decisive changes: the transformation in the status of advertising and the financial reorganization of the press, the growth of publishing of all kinds, the ascent of Hollywood and the consolidation of a nationwide broadcasting network. By 1930 the cultural format of 'mass', 'consumer' capitalism had been designed and patented. In Britain, it was the war itself and the ensuing depression that triggered the process already known as 'Americanization'. The results, in an economy weakened by technical senescence and over-reliant on the stored fat of Empire, were naturally unequal. Yet within twenty years the economy had been considerably remodelled (most evidently in the sphere of distribution) and the national culture had been transformed—by the promotional revolution, the huge expansion of publishing and the cinema, and the creation of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The 'American' motif was prominent among the attractions of Weimar Berlin for young English writers at that time; Paris, in contrast, was the gathering-place of American intellectuals drawn to an older Bohemian style. It was not surprising, for no comparable transformation was experienced in inter-war France. The component processes of the 'second industrial revolution' unfolded slowly and piecemeal, each in its own space and according to its own tempo, in a society that remained archaic overall. A further twenty years and a full constitutional cycle passed before *le défi américain* finally forced a quickened and coordinated pace of modernization on Gaullist France, the breakneck pace that led to the social collision of 1968.

Higher education forms a second plane of comparison. All three countries laid the foundations of their modern university systems around the same time: roughly, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first ten years of the twentieth. The great university reforms of the Third Republic date mainly from the 1880s. In England, where the foundation of London University had already weakened the hegemony of Oxford and Cambridge, the next decade saw the first 'redbrick' institutions of learning chartered as independent universities. Across the Atlantic, in the same years, the first public universities emerged from the old system of Land Grant Colleges. However, the French case stood apart from the British and the American in two decisive respects. The emergent systems in the latter cases were based on recent foundations—Liverpool or Sheffield, Wisconsin or California. The old institutions—Oxford and Cambridge in England, and in the United States the Ivy League colleges—were by-passed, so to speak, in an ambiguous gesture that signified both supersession and untouchability. But the French reforms concerned precisely the old foundations, the Sorbonne and the *grandes écoles* of the Latin Quarter. Beneath this contrast lay a fundamental difference. The late-nineteenth-century innovations in England and the United States belonged to waves of educational expansion that were themselves part of broader processes of economic and cultural change. The innovations of the Third Republic were in this sense socially blank, as the next half-century revealed. By 1930, the national academic corps had grown by under a quarter to 1,405, less than half that of slightly less populous Britain. At the same date, the United States, little more than three times the size of either country, possessed more *institutions* of higher education than France did academic *personnel*, and could claim a university and college student population ten times that of France's secondary schools.⁸ In sum, the reforms of the 1880s had not been expansionist or even, in any sense that Britain or the United States might have echoed, modernist. The French 'multiversity' lay very far ahead still—as far ahead as the 'second industrial revolution'. The *grandes écoles* remained the exclusive, hierarchical institutions they had long been. Yet, as Debray explains, they had indeed been reformed: not so much in what they were or how they functioned as in what they represented.⁹ The consequences for French culture were decisive.

⁸ See Debray's figures (pp. 52–3 below), and for the USA see Donald R. McCoy, *Coming of Age*, Harmondsworth 1973, pp. 116–44.

⁹ See Chapter Two below, especially pp. 58–63.

France: the Republican Clergy

The purpose of the reforms was directly, expressly political: it was to win the university to the role of a secular, democratic successor to the Church, to create in it the loyal and effective ideological custodian of the new, third Republic. The teaching community, with the Sorbonne and the Ecole Normale at its head, was to be invested as a republican clergy—in the words of the Charter of the Union for Moral Action' as 'a militant lay order based on private and public duty'. The collective initiation of the new order in the struggle over Dreyfus—the very moment when the noun *intellectual* was added to the language—is powerfully recounted here, but its lasting significance is insufficiently stressed. 'The primal scene of politics', Debray observes elsewhere in the book, is the prince with his scribes. If that is so, then the 'screening memory', in the collective psyche of the French intelligentsia, is of Conscience in the company of the Republic.

The entente between the University and the Third Republic was the formative experience of the intellectuals, the mould of a dual posture that could seem at times the defining attribute of intellectuality as such. In its 'negative' moment, the posture was factional, one of permanent readiness in the defence of threatened allegiances; but there was also the inseparable 'positive' moment that claimed generality, in cultural terms (transcendent values) and often also politically (popular-democratic 'typicality'). *La Trahison des clercs* at once exemplified and depended upon the paradigmatic authority of this dual posture, the posture of a 'republican clergy'. When the old Dreyfusard attacked the 'organizers of political passions', he cited only opponents of the Republic, on the extreme left (Sorel) or right (Maurras). Durkheim, conceivably the most effective intellectual-politician of the pre-war era' was nowhere mentioned. The Third Republic was more than a political allegiance; it was the *république des professeurs*, the constitutional ground of Reason itself.

This was not a doctrine or a programme; it was rather an objectively constituted repertoire of postures and occasions, a part of the cultural inheritance of generation after generation of French intellectuals and of the audiences to and 'for' whom they spoke. As such it persisted into the publishing and mediatic cycles of the middle and later decades of this century, as a necessary support of the milieux and the practices that Debray describes. True enough, a phenomenon like the New Philosophy presupposed late-capitalist distribution and promotion and the electronic media; and the French apparatuses, being of relatively recent date, are advanced of their kind. It also presupposed the unique degree of centralization that makes Paris the political, academic and lay cultural capital of the country (a fusion of roles elsewhere distributed among, say, Washington, Boston and New York, or London and Oxbridge). But it was quite unimaginable in the absence of the cultural syndrome that ensured that the road to Damascus would be lined with editors and paved with contracts, outside a culture in which the Pauline style was known, expected and prized.

Underlying Debray's tricyclical history there is a continuous tradition

whose forcing-house was the reconstitution of the republican state after 1871. Its epitome is the career of Jean-Paul Sartre—brilliant *normalien*, privileged stipendiary of the house of Gallimard, regular focus of controversy in the media and, in the end, petitioner at the Elysée Palace. Merleau-Ponty once charged that Sartre's dramatic style of socialist 'commitment' was dictated by his unreconstructed philosophical individualism, by 'a conception of freedom that allows only for sudden interventions into the world, for camera shots and flash-bulbs'.¹⁰ But if Sartrean 'commitment' was a distinctively existentialist creation, the press cameras that sensationalized its public moments plainly were not. Sartre inherited not only a philosophical tradition that went back to Descartes, but the established morality, the 'spontaneous ideology' of a corporation. His great personal distinction was that he accepted the role of 'intellectual' with the utmost self-consciousness and passion, and reached its limits in the rarest and most creditable of ways—by pressing its possibilities to the point of exhaustion.

The British Contrast

The legendary contrast that is the British intelligentsia was shaped by a radically different political history. No one could take the Third Republic for granted: the opposite of a historical fatality, it was a project to further or to thwart, a point of controversy in its own right. But in Britain a remarkably continuous state history had the effect of largely withholding basic constitutional questions from political debate; the great issues of nation and state remained, in local parlance, 'above party politics'. The inevitable beneficiary of this history has been the Conservative Party, since the First World War the 'natural party of government' in Britain. The real hegemonic strength of Conservatism may be judged not by its celebrated pragmatism but by the fact that it alone of the parliamentary parties in the last sixty years has a proven capacity for disruptive confrontation—from the break-up of the Lloyd George coalition in the twenties to the onslaught on social provision today. That the power of political initiative is monopolized by the oldest and most continuist of the parties is both cause and consequence of the exceptional constitutional quietism of the polity.

The culture and the intelligentsia formed in this matrix were correspondingly distinctive. The institutional sequence university-publishing-media was repeated, but within a shorter time-span and accordingly to a different principle of combination. Here, the older would characteristically *license* the newer, ceding this specialized function or permitting the extension or duplication of that, or it would encroach upon the newer, after an initial recoil perhaps, to secure its own advantage in the new territory. In neither case was there a decisive transfer of hegemony. The university expansion around the turn of the century was part of a far-reaching process of cultural change, but it scarcely dimmed the radiation of Oxford and Cambridge: if by the mid-twenties these institutions taught only one in every three university students,¹¹ their traditions weighed just as heavily on the other two—

¹⁰ Cit. Aronson, p. 226.

¹¹ C. L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars*, 1918–1940, London 1968.

whose Oxbridge counterpart, now the elite of an elite, in fact enjoyed the old prestige to the second power. At the beginning of the twenties, relations between the university and the lay culture based on publishing were close only among the most archaic and reactionary circles of both, the scholar-gentlemen and the belletrists (the Bloomsbury Group was an exceptional case). For the rest, the contemporary reciprocal hostility of specialized teachers and writers made glib by commissions and deadlines was already quasi-institutional. Yet within twenty-five years the old guards had been dislodged, each by new generations below them, and a new relationship was instituted in which the power of the university was manifest. The end of the forties saw the closure of England's last successful literary magazine of extra-academic provenance, *Horizon*. Throughout the fifties, the eclipse of 'creation' by 'criticism' and of the freelance writer by the academic was widely but unavailingly complained of. By the end of the decade, the major reviewing spaces in the weekly journals and supplements and the prime ideological occasions—'the new Naipaul' or whatever—were largely reserved by a corps of professor-journalists, many, perhaps a majority of them from Oxford and Cambridge. The experience of the electronic media has been in important respects similar. The BBC, as befitted a national broadcasting service, was apparently born venerable. What it lacked in years was made up in the funereal propriety that Reith prescribed as its institutional style. Yet a long time passed before radio, and far longer before television, won the assent of British intellectuals and their established institutions. The politico-cultural innovations of the wartime service, the inception of the Third Programme and, ultimately, the creation of the Open University (complete with Vice-Chancellor 'and all the trimmings', lest any misunderstand¹²) were among the crucial steps in the acceptance-colonization of broadcasting.

It would be perverse to argue that the electronic media are the least powerful of cultural institutions. But it would be equally perverse to insist that when the doyen of Oxford history appears on prime-time television to discuss, say, the Second World War, truth's last citadel has fallen to mediatic barbarism. British continuism has the effect of rejuvenating the older institutions at the expense of the newer. But the rejuvenation of the old, seen from the other side, is the legitimation and regulation of the new, and this is the real strategic value of cultural continuism. The university in effect acts as a licensing authority for other cultural institutions, recognizing and/or regulating the extent and demarcation of their various claims to knowledge and endowing them with something of its own accumulated prestige. The resulting institutional configuration is perhaps unique in its conservative adaptability.

The people whose work was in these institutions were not accustomed to think of themselves as 'intellectuals'. No form of corporate consciousness either drew them together or defined a social role for them as individuals. If the French intelligentsia formed a 'republican

¹² Thus Jennie Lee, the Labour minister responsible (see Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, London 1979, p. 371).

clergy', their English counterparts were decidedly Anglican in temper: aware of higher things but careful not to become tedious on that account, and not really in much doubt of the basic good sense of the nation and those who governed it. It is not, of course, that they constituted a kind of collective 'happy consciousness' willingly allied with the dominant classes. But two contrasting political histories produced two distinct types of intellectual formation. 'Independence' here signified not a self-defining corporate invigilation of a transcendent general interest but the freedom to pursue one's particular (usually occupational) interest without ideological distraction or politico-juridical interference, in conditions where 'the Constitution' was not a redoubt to be defended or stormed, not even an arena of free civic activity, but a half-noticed, hardly changing country landscape.

The sectoral distribution of political allegiances also differed from one country to the other. In France, according to Debray, academics and teachers have traditionally inclined to the left, writers to the right. This was so during the Dreyfus affair, in the political crisis of the mid-thirties, and is the case again today. But in Britain, it is probably true to say, the intellectual radicalization of the thirties was more marked in the lay culture dominated by writers than in the universities. The new phase of political division that opened in the mid-seventies has taken yet another form. In keeping with the apparent international pattern of the misnamed 'crisis of Marxism',¹³ the rupture has occurred within the nationally dominant politico-cultural formation of the workers movement: not, as in France, Marxism of any kind but *Fabianism*. The old centre-left consensus has been largely dispersed, leaving the intelligentsia polarized both in its academic and in its lay sectors.

Other, not directly political motifs of intra-cultural antagonism recurred here, but again in variant forms. The struggle between Paris and the provinces, between privilege and merit, between the versatile amateur and the specialized professional, was epitomized in the hostility between the University and the Academy, between the schools of the Latin Quarter and the salons of the Right Bank. A similar deployment of values was apparent in England between the wars, but here the lines of battle were drawn *inside* the universities, dividing the scholar-gentlemen from the young professionals whose only resource was talent. The main issue in the struggle was the cultural authority of the new discipline of English, whose cause was championed by the Leavises and the writers based on the quarterly *Scrutiny*. The campaign was in one central sense successful. By the end of the Second World War the new generation had effectively displaced the old guard on their own terrain, and within a further ten to fifteen years they had extended

¹³ The first outbreaks of the 'crisis' occurred in the Maoist or semi-Maoist far-left currents of France and Italy, extending also to the Communist Parties, particularly in the latter case, and involving a number of independents as well. These circumstances were taken—in many cases avidly seized—as evidence of a general crisis of *Marxism*. The less sensational but better attested hypothesis of a crisis of Maoism, or of culpably lingering illusions in Stalinism, was less enthusiastically bruited, being not so flattering to the renegades or ideologically so serviceable to their new allies.

their influence over much of the lay literary culture outside the universities. But the profession of English, as it took shape in England, was both an occupation and a claim, the one quite inseparable from the other. The claim was, in effect, that English could and must become the organizing centre of an intellectual elite capable of interpreting the general interest to a society structurally incapable of self-direction — the centre, that is, of an intelligentsia of the 'classic', 'French' type. The fortunes of this cultural effort were complex, but to the Leavises it came to seem like an unending defeat. French intellectuals could claim to represent a general interest as if by public statute; the Leavises' attempt to win the same prerogative for their discipline was met with scorn. The underlying paradox of the French intelligentsia was that its corporate independence was seen as a positive warrant of constitutional stability; it was much the same paradox that appeared, greatly exacerbated, in Leavis's increasingly wilful, subjectivist insistence that he, more or less alone, defended the 'real' world of English culture against its actual, degraded simulacrum. Every assertion of intellectual corporatism served only to emphasize the irreducible difference between the two national cultures and their respective types.

The American Paradox

The Leavises would occasionally couple the United States with France in favourable contrast with England. There too, in the vast American public education system, careers were open to talent. At other times, they would represent the USA as England's future. It was the historic model of all the changes that were remaking traditional patterns of consumption and recreation between the wars, yet its traditions of intellectual independence were such that it seemed also to offer the most advanced paradigms of opposition to the march of 'industrial civilization'. There was demonstrable point in both suggestions, but neither really registered the historical uniqueness of the US social formation, which fostered a distinctive intellectual stratum and a remarkable national variation on the enigmatic modern phenomenon of intellectual corporatism.

The United States on the morrow of the armistice contrasted with France and Britain not only in the degree of its economic development (it was now the world's premier capitalist economy); it was also an exceptionally decentralized and in important respects fragmented society. Federal institutions and activity had developed rapidly in the first twenty years of the century, and would acquire unprecedented centrality in the course of the thirties, yet there was no commensurate evolution towards a genuinely 'national' system of political parties or media along familiar European lines. Regional and other particularisms (religious and/or ethnic) remained proportionately strong in US politics and culture.

However, if in this sense US national institutions appeared underdeveloped, in another sense their politico-juridical ground-plan, the Constitution itself, enjoyed a corresponding prominence. The genesis

of the modern United States might be said to have inverted the normal historical relationships of nation-state formation, a small and compact settlement achieving a basic state-form which it then 'filled' with populations and territories many times its own size. The state created the nation, as it were, in a process that continued right into the 1920s. (As late as 1920, fully *one-third* of us citizens were first- or second-generation settlers.) But the nationalism that arose in these conditions was necessarily different equally from the separatist and the unificationist nationalisms of Europe. Lacking—by definition—that popular prehistory of kinship and custom from which to fashion an effective 'national consciousness', an inclusive us nationalism could look no further back than the Constitution, before which there was, mythically, nothing but a wilderness and a latter-day project of Creation. Thus the founding texts of the us polity and the themes that cluster around them were internalized, in a kind of para-nationalist constitutional fetishism, as one of the true *longues durées* of American culture.

The us intelligentsia, as it took shape in the early decades of this century, reproduced this para-nationalist thematic in its own dominant collective ideology. This was, in effect, the dominant ideology of its main institutional emplacement, the national educational system, and, in its most elaborated version, the intellectual achievement of one profoundly influential thinker: John Dewey. Dewey's educational thought was radically and expressly functionalist: it envisaged a school system that would produce adequate numbers of young adults trained in the skills and attitudes required to sustain the American economic and political order. It was, in this respect, a creed of active national conformism, and in conditions where the weight of pre-bourgeois educational and other cultural values was virtually nil, its hegemony over the intelligentsia was assured. Yet pragmatism as a whole was more than this, and even in its applied forms could plausibly claim to be more than a policy-maker's schema. For the underlying warrant of its conformism was not some ancient *Volksgeist* but a body of postulate and argument, a constitutional rationalism that in principle transcended particular interests. The Deweyan watchword 'education for citizenship' was not only functionalist; it also evoked notions of an order based always and everywhere on free, reasoned participation and valuing critical independence as a cultural norm. Dewey's later career itself showed that these notions were not always and everywhere mere pieties; but only very special cultural conditions could so enhance their power that they became dominant in the ideological formation of a whole segment of the intelligentsia—as was in fact to happen in the milieu of *Partisan Review* and the 'New York intellectuals'.¹⁴

¹⁴ Dewey was an important intellectual influence on several at least of the *Partisan Review* circle, most notably Sidney Hook and James Burnham, but also James T. Farrell. The Commission on the Moscow Trials and the Committee for Cultural Freedom brought the philosopher into direct contact with the journal. (See James Burkhart Gilbert, *Writers and Partisans*, New York 1968, pp. 201-3 and *passim*; and Alan Wald, *James T. Farrell: the Revolutionary Socialist Years*, New York 1978). Yet Dewey attained a national cultural influence that *Partisan Review* could never emulate. It was very much a New York journal throughout and New York's relationship to the USA was not at all like that of London or Paris to their respective national settings.

'The New York Intellectuals'

The nucleus of this intellectual formation was triply marginalized within its cultural environment in the thirties. First, many of its members had come out of the East European Jewish immigration, at a time when that community was only partly assimilated and discriminatory practices—most relevantly the *numerus clausus* in higher education—oppressed their children. Second, the dominant political influence in the group was Trotskyism, here as elsewhere a controversial minority current within the intellectual left. Third, their cultural orientation was defiantly internationalist and avant-garde at a time when the Popular Frontist literary intelligentsia had joined with an older generation of nativist ideologues in an intolerant cult of 'Americanism'. These were not auspicious circumstances for any new, independent magazine starting out in 1937. But the writers around *Partisan Review* embraced their individual and collective vulnerabilities and made them the substance of a programme, an ethos and a style. The 'New York intellectuals' were anti-academic, and even where (as increasingly) they drew their main income from university teaching, they practised a versatile, generalist mode of writing that was at odds with the prevailing 'Germanic' emphasis on specialized scholarship. Their cultural stance entailed outright opposition to the emergent 'mass culture' of the American city, but they were equally firm in their rejection of conservative nostalgia, whether populist or elitist. Their political disinterestedness was the opposite of quietist; only a minority was ever directly politically engaged, but politics was always a central reference for them, and furnished the occasions of their most vigorous polemical sorties. Bohemians in the academy, moralists in the market-place, intimates of a literature beyond factions yet veterans of the politics of culture: such were the members of what was arguably the 'alienated intelligentsia' par excellence.

Or such, rather, was what Lionel Trilling—the Arnoldian of the circle—might have called their collective 'best self'. For the historical record of the New York intellectuals was one of increasing incorporation and dependence. They may have been 'alienated' from the dominant culture but they belonged to it nonetheless. As Stalinism and the run-up to war drove their politics into crisis, the editors of *Partisan Review* came increasingly to define this alienation as the characteristic state of the displaced, propertyless intellectual. In doing so, they both mistook the real determinations of their original isolation—which had been their minoritarian politics and aesthetics—and misread the cultural affinities of the ideal of 'intellectual' in the American context. This ideal had first emerged in the writings of Van Wyck Brooks and his Westport school as part of an explicitly *nationalist* cultural programme; and the evolution of the New York intellectuals showed that the association would be a lasting one.¹⁵ *Partisan Review* entered the 1950s utterly

¹⁵ Brooks's programme was the deviant continuation of Randolph Bourne's, which had envisaged a balanced combination of nationalism and internationalism. *Partisan Review* criticized Brooks's nationalism before the war, citing Bourne's position as more acceptable and more radical in its affinities. But cultural cosmopolitanism alone was not a sufficient safeguard against nationalist attitudes, after the subsidence of its own radicalism.

transformed. Its political poise had been badly shaken by the war against the Axis and shattered by the Cold War that followed. The journal now supported the US State Department's global effort to contain the spread of Communism. At home, it favoured a pre-emptive ideological strike that would deal with the political menace while averting the risk of an over-vigorous right-wing assault on civil liberties—the political proclivities of America's 'liberal' intelligentsia were the target of Trilling's major post-war intervention, *The Liberal Imagination*. In the outcome, the journal's solicitude did nothing to avert the McCarthy repression or—Rahv's solitary and heavily qualified disquiet notwithstanding—to resist it when it was unleashed. By 1952, alienation was sufficiently assuaged for the *Review* to run a symposium on 'Our Country and Our Culture'.

Thus, a rhetoric of independence coexisted with a record of conformity. 'The intellectual' and the free play of 'mind' became cultic objects in a milieu that, much in keeping with the surrounding culture, was deeply conservative in the fifties, liberal and even radical in the sixties and early seventies, only to swerve rightwards again thereafter. Prominent writers were sharing drinks and ideas at the White House before the Elysée Palace was added to the social map of the high intelligentsia; and Parisian 'Gulag chic' has its tougher-minded equivalent in the New York-Washington 'military-intellectual complex'.

The post-war history of the New York intellectuals is perhaps most starkly illuminated by the career of one of their younger representatives, Norman Podhoretz. Podhoretz studied with Trilling at Columbia (and then Leavis at Cambridge) in the immediate post-war period. Having completed his academic studies, he joined the prestigious New York magazine *Commentary*, of which he became editor in 1960. Formed in the *Partisan Review*'s 'liberal anti-Communism', he later embraced an idiosyncratic 'radicalism' based on Mailer, Goodman and Norman O. Brown. But by the later sixties this amalgam had disintegrated, and Podhoretz turned towards the neo-conservative politics whose most clamorous publicist he now is. The main purpose of his recent memoir, *Breaking Ranks*, was to recapitulate and defend these successive allegiances, but its most powerful demonstration is of a whole tradition quite radically blocked. The 'alienation', or what remains of it, is of a wayward society from the quintessential American standard represented by the 'intellectual'. And that appellation, claimed compulsively on page after page, is no longer primarily important as a reference—to a milieu, say, or a programme; it is now above all the symptom of a measureless self-regard.¹⁶

¹⁶ New York 1979. Podhoretz's latest production is *Present Danger*, a bugle-call summoning America to the reconquest of its rightful place in the world. Prominent among Podhoretz's *blatant noirs* is the *New York Review*, which has replicated the early history of *Partisan Review*. On the left in the sixties and early seventies, when it was an influential platform for anti-war sentiment, the journal has moved rightwards in recent years, while retaining its broad cultural interests. A further parallel is the reliance of both journals on English contributors—a policy more marked in the case of the *New York Review*, which has actually launched a sister-publication in London. The *Review*'s most prominent, regular writers include Susan Sontag, who might be seen as complementary to Podhoretz, conserving the modernist commitments, the range, vigour and essayistic flair that distinguished the best writing of the New York intellectuals.

Debray and the French Tradition

The purpose of these comparative notes is not to set the scene for general theoretical conclusions; that would presuppose more exacting historical scholarship and finer analytic tools than any utilized here. But it is difficult, as one considers these divergent yet oddly echoing histories, not to feel curious about the sources of Debray's polemical energy, not to inquire what exactly it is that underwrites his freelance oppositionism.

The main impulse in *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities* is undoubtedly political. It is political first of all in the general sense that its inquiry into the development of the French cultural apparatuses is shaped by a strong strategic preoccupation with the forms of bourgeois power and the answering forms of an adequate socialist programme. But Debray's more topical and more intimate concern here is with the political fate of a whole intellectual generation. The strength of this motivation can be measured by its very persistence. In 1967, in the first of what was to have been thirty years in a Bolivian gaol, he wrote 'In Settlement of All Accounts', a vivid memoir of his students days at the Ecole Normale.¹⁷ He was already conscious then of a certain unreality in the political attachments of his milieu, and of the rising pressure of careerism and competition inside it. Within a decade his worst fears had been borne out. His *Modeste contribution aux discounts et cérémonies officielles du dixième anniversaire*, published in 1978, depicted the May explosion as a functional crisis of development for consumer capitalism in France, and attacked its intellectual notables for their regression to irrationalism and political reaction.¹⁸ The present work is a more ambitious attempt to lay bare the specifically cultural structural mechanisms that led to the all but total collapse of the Parisian left intelligentsia in later seventies, by one of its very few honourable survivors.

However, Debray's politically intransigent Marxism is not his only resource. His mediology produces a 'Frankfurtian' analysis that explicitly denies the presence of politically sufficient contradictions within the cultural order. How, then, is his own position sustained? This is the function of a second level of his text. From time to time Debray will pause to mediate on the trans-generational continuities of the old *lyctes*, or to demand 'total support' for the few surviving literary reviews of the old kind, or to brood on the possibility of a world without *Le Monde*. These passages are intermittent and brief, but they are more than rhetoric. They are outcrops of a discourse that underlies the expanse of *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities*: the classic discourse of the French intellectual tradition. The undeclared activity of this discourse is responsible for certain anomalous features of the text, very notably the systematic recourse to anatomical and zoological metaphor, as if in compensation for a forbidden ontology. 'External'

¹⁷ *Prison Writings*, pp. 169-207. This essay has never been published in France.

¹⁸ The bulk of this work has been translated in *New Left Review* 115 ('A Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary', May-June 1979, pp. 45-65) together with a reply by Henri Weber (pp. 66-71).

circumstances also suggest the ambiguities of the association. The fact that a Marxist reflecting on the involution of the French intellectual tradition can spontaneously reproduce the themes of its minoritarian English counterpart of fifty years ago is a sign that strong cultural currents are running in channels that remain to be opened for investigation. One can know only what one refuses, says Debray, paraphrasing Goethe. Mediology, with its emphatic commitment to the primacy of explanation, suggests the necessary correction. The maxim is a half-truth whose necessary complement is its inverse: one can refuse only what one *knows*.

The Tragedy of the Turkish Left

For twenty years, from 1960 to 1980, the Turkish left struggled to match its remarkable militancy, and not inconsiderable support, to the realities of its country and its time. Ultimately, socialists were able to garner 3 per cent of the national vote in 1979, a disappointing figure. Today their organizations are illegal. Both the failure and the potential of the Turkish left were symbolized by a massive gathering at Taksim, the big square of Istanbul, on May Day 1977. The celebration was called by the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers Unions (DISK)—the more radical of two such associations in Turkey—and 200,000 socialists responded. They gathered behind a welter of different, often competing banners. Devrimci Yol (Revolutionary Way) had 40,000 followers, Kurtuluş 10,000. Both were independent groups with origins in the guerrilla struggles of the 1960s. All three of Turkey's pro-Soviet groups were present. There were many student and professional associations, as well as the workers of the unions themselves. The historic disaster which awaited them was pre-figured by the brutal conclusion to the gathering. As a Maoist group attempted

to force its way into the meeting to denounce its 'social-fascist' character, some of its cadres fired into the air. Immediately, another volley from the rooftops was aimed at the crowd. Panic ensued. Thirty-nine were left dead, most crushed in the stampede. Henceforth, the left would be caught in a violent struggle with the far right, an enemy which was not only numerous and unified but which was also closer to various branches of the state, as symbolized by the strategic emplacement of the gunmen. For three years fighting escalated. The military prevented an outright fascist victory, and in national terms the real conflict for state power was between these forces on the right. In the process, however, the left through its political immaturity contributed to its own defeat.

The problem has not been one of fragmentation and sectarianism alone, although the inability of the left groups to unite against the fascists has been the most graphic demonstration of their collective immaturity. Before the recent military coup the spectrum of competing groups on the Turkish left was quite staggering. First there was the largest organization, Devrimci-Yol, which was also very loose, almost a federation. Secondly, the Maoists possessed a paper, *Aydinlik*, which may have been the largest circulation pro-Chinese daily in the world outside of Chinese communities. Thirdly, in the factories and in some trade unions the traditional Communist Party (TKP) exercised considerable influence. Yet each of these three general currents—the independent, the pro-Maoist (or pro-Chinese) and the pro-Soviet—were in turn split between relatively strong contending factions. It must be noted, of course, that the variegated divisions of the Turkish left found a parallel in the traditional instability of parliamentary alliances and succession of governments in Ankara: division is a general feature of Turkish society. Equally important is what all the left groups shared in common at the level of their political practice and conduct of mass work. Across the various divides that separated them, it is evident that all sectors of the Turkish left tended to alienate the masses in the name of the masses. Many Istanbul workers, for example, have to commute across the Bosphorus. The boats are crowded, the journey is especially tiring after work. Imagine their feelings as they crowd off the boat onto the landing and search for their bus for the next stage of their journey, when they are met by newspaper-sellers who cry, 'power grows out of the barrel of a gun!' Nor does only the 'ultra-left' have a monopoly of such counter-productive political activity. The manipulative entrism of 'realistic' tacticians who spurn anything that smacks of 'adventurism' can be just as demoralizing, both because of its superficial cynicism and because it deliberately disarms, rather than 'over-arms' the necessary combativity of the masses.

A similar criticism might also be levelled at the 'social-democratic' leader of the Republican Peoples' Party (RPP), Bulent Ecevit, who managed to gain a slender parliamentary majority in 1977. He failed to consolidate his popular base and, instead of calling upon the working class to assist him in the struggle against fascism, he presented himself as the personification of the state. The RPP's Atatürkist origins, its

tradition of *étatisme* and rule from above,¹ triumphed over the enthusiasm from below which had brought it back to power. De Gaulle in his moment of deepest crisis was able to go on television and appeal to the people, '*aidez moi*.' Such boldness was beyond Ecevit's reach. When workers went on strike against a fascist terrorist outrage, he scolded them and in effect told them to mind their own business. Ecevit's attitude encouraged the far right, demoralized the left, and, paradoxically, disappointed sections of capital as well. The latter were upset because in 1977 some big industrial concerns were willing to take a chance with Ecevit if he could deliver his promised social-democratic 'solution' to Turkey, integrating the working class into national politics and thereby stabilizing its exploitation.

Yet socialists outside Turkey have scarcely recognized the full dimensions of the disaster which accompanied Ecevit's ultimate ouster from power by Demirel in 1979. Demirel's minority government regained power only with the support of the National Salvationists, the Islamic fundamentalist party, and of the Action Party, the Turkish fascist movement whose 'Grey Wolves' have claimed so many lives. This much is widely known, of course. But less understood is how Ecevit's inability to prevent such an outcome, after having had the prize of office once more in his hands, was in international terms perhaps a 'Chile' for social democracy in the Third World. My aim in this article will be to inquire into some of the causes of the Turkish left's 'impotent potential'. I will look at the way the left has made its presence keenly felt whenever the class struggle assumes more violent forms, yet has been quite unable to integrate itself into the daily life of the oppressed, who are badly in need of help and self-organization. This is not a matter of contrasting the parliamentary and the insurrectionary roads to socialism, but of critically examining the 'militaristic' virtues of a left which is almost crippled by the demands of peaceful work or co-operation, despite its collectivist ideology. The brief, chronological survey which follows does not pretend to be a history of Turkish socialism, nor an account of the class struggle in the Turkish formation. It is an initial inquiry into the strategic disorientation and the associated 'structure of feeling' which has kept the Turkish left in its fateful grip.

I. The Kemalist Legacy

The Stillbirth of Turkish Communism

The first Turkish Communist Party was founded, under the leadership of Mustafa Suphi, in June 1920, inside the Soviet Union. The proximity of the Russian revolution thus led to a Leninist organization before most other countries. Despite this, the Third International had little direct effect on Turkish political life, or indeed on the traditions of the Turkish left: in terms of international comparison the greatest

¹ See Çağlar Keyder, 'The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy,' *NLR* 115, May-June 1979, pp. 11-16, 40; and F. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, Cambridge (USA) 1965.

influence of the rkp was its absence from the scene. The reason was not primarily the subordination of the Party's interests to the state concerns of the fledgling USSR. That happened, but it was the context in which it occurred which was decisive. Turkish Communism was stifled at birth by the prior success of Kemal Ataturk's independence movement.

Ataturk's nationalism was of a specific variety. Its early victory was rooted in inherited, pre-First World War, Ottoman traditions. A 'Turkified' extension of state-organized, Ottoman enlightenment, Kemal's independence movement fought against (but later was aided by) British and French imperialism. It crushed Greek attempts to cash in on the Ottoman defeat in the Great War. But Ataturk did not draw his support from a popular resistance. On the contrary, he based his army on demobilized veterans, while coercing peasants to fight in the ranks (more were killed fleeing the lines than died under Greek guns, a remarkable tribute to the Turkish peasant's sense of self-interest). Of course, this weakened Ataturk's fighting ability, and meant that the 'Green Army' was at first a vital ally for him. Led by Ethem, a Circassian populist, the 'Green Army' was a guerilla-type, peasant force inspired by hopes of expropriating the village merchants and notables. Its existence demonstrated that a liberation which combined class with national struggles was a possibility at that time. Ataturk, however, although opposed to foreign domination, was a Western-oriented modernizer and secularist who had no intention of overthrowing indigenous capitalism. His greatest skill was in combining his domestic aims with a shrewd grasp of international realities. Thus he welcomed Soviet diplomatic support against the British in his most difficult hour, while simultaneously preparing to liquidate his own populist allies.

As his position strengthened, Ataturk crushed the 'Green Army' with his own professional force under the command of his trusted subordinate, General İnönü. That same month, January 1921, Suphi and a small group of his comrades were somehow inveigled to visit Turkey from the USSR. They were drowned off Trebizond in a classic, Ottoman-style elimination. Thus both the founding Turkish Communist as well as the most militant class force were cut down within weeks. Two months later the Soviet-Turkish treaty was signed, which in its preamble committed both countries to 'the struggle against imperialism'. Two years later, Bukharin was to argue that Turkey: 'in spite of all persecutions of Communists, plays a revolutionary role, since she is a destructive instrument in relation to the imperialist system as a whole'.²

In underdeveloped countries like Turkey, Communists had to form an alliance with the most radical sectors of the bourgeoisie, both in order to legalize themselves, and in order to find some breathing space. Of course, this tends to make socialist movements an appendage of 'national progress', a universal dilemma posed in the first place by the history of the USSR itself, and one that has not been adequately studied. In Turkey, it was beyond the powers of the small Communist Party to distinguish between the 'progressive bourgeoisie' and 'radical

² Cited in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23*, Volume 3, Penguin Edition, London 1977, p. 479.

Kemalism', if indeed there was a difference. But it was also very difficult to distinguish between 'left-Kemalism' and its right-wing variants, except with regard to the sole criterion of repression against the Communists themselves. The TKP was thus ideologically disarmed, and further confused by Kemalist modernization. Ataturk was commandist towards the peasantry, cultist towards his own personality, a secular, Western-oriented modernizer who attempted to create some industry based on the state sector. With the curve of Stalinism on the rise in Moscow, Turkish communists proved unable to take their distance from this programme. The result was that a small cadre indulged in a theoretical capitulation which deprived Turkey of any Marxist analysis of its history when this was needed in the 1960s.

Instead of recognizing the 'Bonapartist' character of the Ataturk regime, with its state-organized primitive accumulation which created the conditions for a monopolistic bourgeoisie, the Turkish Communists insisted on seeing the Kemalist movement as a petty-bourgeois force which could be influenced in radical directions. In fact, it was Ataturkism which made use of them, not the other way round. The militant eclecticism of Kemalist *statism* has had an enduring effect. To give only one telling example: the word '*devrim*' which literally means 'revolution'. The official history of the republic records Ataturk's 'revolution'. The word is there in one of the six arrows on the symbol of the Republican People's Party (along with statism, populism, laicism, nationalism and republicanism). But the official language also talks about the 'hat revolution', meaning the abolition of the fez; the 'letter revolution', meaning the Romanization of the Turkish script; the 'calendar revolution', the 'surname revolution', etc. In effect, therefore, the word means reform. Communists, who for obvious reasons could not call themselves socialists or Communists, instead referred to themselves as 'revolutionaries', making use of that term's official sanction. But the ambiguity has functioned to assist the existing order. The 'true', 'Turkish' revolution is that decreed by Ataturk—wearing a Western hat, etc. Meanwhile, the small and clandestine 'revolutionary' party of Communists was easily followed by the police, and TKP members were subject to arrest whenever the government felt the need for an anti-Communist witch-hunt.

Thus the most pernicious legacy of Kemalism for the left has been its combination of radical-progressive policies imposed *from above* on the Turkish masses. It has created a Jacobin tradition in which the militant struggle for state power, or what is seen as such, continues, separate from and even against the wishes and concerns of workers and peasants. At the same time Kemalist politics left another legacy. Immense social changes took place across the huge and complex land. With deep structures of both Western and Eastern origin, Turkey is reducible to neither. Ataturk represented one moment of this special combination, when Turkey became a modern nation-state, albeit one *without* the critical attribute of popular participation. That paradox—which distinguishes his nationalism from almost all others—is perhaps the key to understanding Turkish developments today. But it does not mean that the people—peasants, workers, bourgeois—were not tremendously effected by the modernization of a backward country even if the process

had been initiated by dictatorial means. In response, much of the creative and thoughtful modern culture in Turkey has been socialist or left-populist in character. Although the TKP was one of the most marginal and ineffective Communist parties of the 1930s and 1940s, it had as one of its members, Nazim Hikmet, Turkey's supreme poet.

The Turkish Democratic Pronunciamento

Until independent socialist activity was legalized by the constitutional measures which followed the 1960 coup, the Turkish left remained totally marginalized through the postwar period. In 1950, the Democratic Party came to power and launched a McCarthyite campaign against the TKP, whose leader and successor to Suphi, Şefik Husnu together with his comrades was put in jail. Under conditions of defeat and repression, a fierce competition for the future leadership of the TKP ensued inside the country, between Mihri Belli and Zeki Baştımar. The latter left the country after imprisonment and became General Secretary after the death of Husnu. Meanwhile Belli remained behind, outside the party, biding his time and making his influence felt after his own fashion. The TKP was thus reduced to a small émigré organization, with a foreign radio transmitter for which Moscow provided the electricity. Baştımar's own successor, İsmail Bilen has now lived outside the country since the early thirties and indeed has had an ambiguous relationship to the Soviet state. But if the Turkish left was frozen during the Cold War, the class character of the Turkish state underwent decisive modification, which brought the bureaucratic monopoly of Kemalism to an end. The nature of these changes must be briefly considered here, in order to see how the Marxist left failed to comprehend their real character, with painful results for all in the subsequent decades.

In 1946, İnönü, who had succeeded Atatürk to the Presidency, announced the creation of a multi-party democracy. During the Second World War, Turkey had blown with the Nazi wind. Now with the lure of American aid and the threat of Soviet demands for war-rights over the straits, it turned sharply towards the United States. Ironically, the Kemalist bureaucracy made its offer too eagerly for its own good. The swiftness of its democratic *pronunciamento* predated the onset of the cold war when Washington began to show its preference for 'stable' dictatorships along the Soviet border. Nonetheless, the 'westernizing' tendency in Kemalism made a significant commitment to a liberal order with free elections. The result was its popular ejection from power four years later. A peasantry tired of bureaucratic exactions, a merchant class eager to gain control over capital, combined to give the Democratic Party of Menderes an overwhelming majority based on a huge turnout; this new class alliance was instantly rewarded by the boom conditions of the Korean war (a war which also demonstrated Turkey's new international allegiance as 5,000 of its troops were deployed there to battle against Communism).

Çağlar Keyder has emphasized that the 1950 elections represent the watershed 'from one pattern of capitalist development to another'—

much more acutely exposed to shifts in the world capitalist economy.³ On the other hand, until now the Marxist left has generally interpreted the 1950 change of power as a 'counter-revolution', because the Democrats were pro-imperialist internationally, subservient to the United States, eager to give capitalism some popular support, and culturally conservative. In fact, in the villages, where the majority of the population lived, what took place was a real extension of civic rights. The least significant peasant suddenly found he had a place in the political structure. He gained a small but important benefit. He saw an end to the unquestioned supremacy of the bureaucratic emissary from the towns. But in the towns, the state functionaries and the intellectuals feared the consolidation of his new power bloc, which even threatened to exclude the army from the inner circles of power. As it became clear that the Democratic Party would be immovable electorally, corruption mounted and Menderes gathered more power into his hands. Finally he was removed from power by the army, who, after an absurd and disgraceful trial, executed him and two of his colleagues. This coup on 27 May 1960, headed by General Gursel, forged a counterweight to the 1950 election.

Fearing that a consolidated rural majority might permanently exclude it from power, the Kemalist elite drew up a new constitution which safeguarded its position through reforms aimed to create new urban allies. Thus the new constitution ensured a wide range of civil rights and freedom of the press as well as providing for proportional representation in the election of members of parliament. A subsequent law gave legal respite to trade union organization for the first time. To this extent the Kemalists complemented and completed the democratic transformation initiated in 1950 with the extension of voting rights to the peasantry. The two moments, however, exhibited paradoxical and contrasting consequences. Thus the 1950 election was a democratic and progressive event that had a reactionary outcome, while the 1960 coup was blatantly undemocratic yet produced a liberal reform of Turkish government. How should these two events be understood? A Kemalist would undoubtedly contrast the reactionary consequences of 1950 with the gains of 1960. A socialist view *should* have, on the contrary, recognized the positive aspect of the politicization which was confirmed in 1950 as well grasping how the dynamic of military intervention which secured the passage of the new constitution in 1961 simultaneously threatened to annul its effective application. In other words, without dissenting from the Kemalist evaluation of the *policy* results of the two changes (reactionary politics after 1950, progressive reforms after 1960), a socialist assessment of the underlying *political form* of these two critical developments should have completely reversed the positive and negative signs attached to them. Furthermore, a socialist analysis should also have foreseen that to continue to strive for radical-military solutions to the country's crises would be to perpetuate an historical anachronism. For the final effect of the remarkable constitutional coup of 27 May 1960 was to *complete* the dismantling of the ambiguity in the Kemalist state, henceforth a 'leftist' repetition of the coup was impossible. Yet it was precisely the desire for change from

³ Keyder, p. 19.

the top down, in the guise of a call for 'national democratic revolution', which tragically became the dominant strategic goal of most Turkish socialist groups in the decade which followed. By its failure to accurately understand the meaning of the 1950 and 1960 events, the Turkish left was theoretically and politically shackled to an obsolete and romanticised vision of an alliance between the working masses and a 'progressive' state bureaucracy.

II. The Rise of the New Left

1961—A Brave Beginning

While certain articles in the Turkish penal code (adopted from Mussolini's) continue to forbid an open communist party, the new constitution specifically allowed for the creation of a socialist party. Thus in 1961, fifteen trade union leaders (two of whom later turned out to be police agents) organized the Turkish Workers' Party (TİP). They had broken away from the main trade union federation Turk-İs⁴, and at first their new party had a strictly *anarhist* ideology which attracted little support. Realizing their mistake, they invited Mehmet Ali Aybar to become the party's chairman with the aim of giving it a broader, dynamic appeal. Aybar was a well-known writer and professor of law who himself had been victimized in an early witch-hunt. Originally he had supported the Democrats in their struggle against the single-party regime of RPP, and he was one of the very few leftists who grasped the real significance of the opening of the political system in 1950. After his appointment TİP came to play a very important role—indeed a seminal one—for the Turkish left, and it was eventually through the vortex of TİP's internal struggles that the various fragments were dispersed which make up a large part of the contemporary left. In the beginning, however, TİP was distinguished by its freshness and unorthodoxy. In contrast to the older TKP, which remained small in numbers and monolithic in organization, the TİP was heterogeneous to the point of populism, campaigning openly and energetically, and for a short time capable of linking socialist arguments to the concrete problems of the masses—a quality which makes the early TİP unique until this day.

The emergence of TİP as a unitarian socialist party was also partly due to the situation in the international workers movement at the time of its creation. Krushchev's de-Stalinization had not yet divided world communism and the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions were still in their 'heroic' stages. Ten years later such ideological unity seemed inconceivable as new Maoist and Guevarist currents contested with older, orthodox parties. Indeed if the specific political essence of TİP could be summed up in a single sentence, it could be said that generationally and in Anglo-American terms it was a unique party of the 'old new left.' It contained a panorama of ideas, attitudes and priorities. Thus while not favourable to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' it

⁴ Turk-İs had been originally founded with the sponsorship of the American Institute of Free Labor Development (AFILD) as part of the worldwide crusade to establish pro-US, anti-communist trade union federations as bulwarks of the Cold War.

was certainly socialist and even pro-Soviet in a peace-movement fashion. Unlike vaguely comparable groups in Europe or North America, however, TİP was not merely a collective of intellectuals. It was able to articulate trade-union demands with some programme for land reform as well as embracing the aspirations of the radical sectors of the Kurdish minority.

As a counterpoint to TİP, with its 'western socialist' hope of transforming Turkish society through the creation of a mass workers' party, was the political current which emerged around the Istanbul weekly, *Yön* (*Direction*). The paper had been founded in December 1961 by a young writer named Doğan Avcioğlu and opened with a manifesto that attracted 500 prominent signatories and such widespread interest that its circulation quickly reached 30,000—a phenomenal figure for a leftist paper in Turkey at that time. The politics of *Yön* comprised what might be called a social-democratic inflection of Kemalism: anti-feudal, *statist*, yet Third Worldist. For Avcioğlu and his sponsors, 'under-development' was the primary characteristic of contemporary Turkey and rapid economic growth, led and planned by the state, was the fundamental political task. In the absence of a large working class and confronted by overwhelming peasant population, *Yön* argued for a 'national front' in which all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces could combine in order to create a 'national democracy' in which power would be altruistically shared by all patriotic strata. In parliamentary terms, Avcioğlu argued for an Assembly in which 'the masses' held 75% of the seats, while the progressive intelligentsia and its cadres occupied the remainder. Thus *Yön's* politics were actually a rather sensitive reflection of the dilemma faced by progressives in Turkey in the early sixties. Kemalist radicalism, confirmed by the advances of the 1961 coup, beckoned across a backward countryside dominated by superstitious petty landholders. *Yön* articulated the strategy which would become the keynote of the decade: the 'national democratic revolution,' a left-Kemalist substitutionalism which projected that the élite, technocrats and officers, would lead Turkey 'independently' on behalf of the workers and peasants—'for the people, despite the people.'

The 1965 Elections

In this fundamental sense *Yön*, although drawing upon leading TİP contributors as well as those to its right from the RPP, projected 'leftish' positions which were really more backward than those of the other groups. There was, of course, some truth in the argument that Turkish society was both underdeveloped and not naturally suitable for a parliamentary socialism based upon a Western European model. But there was no truth in either the underlying diagnosis or the prescription: the Turkish bourgeoisie was not merely comprador, the Turkish army was not commanded by radical-socialist officers. The arguments came to a head only after TİP scored its moment of triumph. In 1965, in the first national elections fought by TİP it gained 300,000 votes and 15 seats in the assembly, primarily due to the system of proportional representation and to the radio access it was granted. It was a staggering victory, but momentary. For one thing, the election rules were

immediately changed so as not to bestow such favours on small parties in the future. More important, the votes showed that the Workers' Party had not become a workers' party. In Istanbul, where it obtained nearly a third of its votes, these seem to have come predominantly from middle-class 'progressives' rather than from the poorer, workers' quarters. In the countryside, TİP's support came overwhelmingly from Kurds and Alevis (the Turkish Shi'ite minority). Aybar had laid great emphasis on land reform and had campaigned across Anatolia, to that extent the vote was a worthy achievement. But his trade union backers had not been able to deliver their constituency on any scale. Thus the argument that the workers represented the base for an enduring socialist strategy seemed gravely weakened, while at the same time leftist radicalism surged. It was precisely then, however, that the Turkish working class started to move, even as the left intelligentsia was swept by theories which abandoned interest in the proletariat.

This 1965 election gave Demirel's right-wing Justice Party, the successor to the Democratic Party of Menderes, an absolute majority in the legislature based upon a peasant plurality which seemed bound to invite a re-run of the 1960 military intervention. This was not because of any simple economic failure, on the contrary there was an extremely high rate of growth, at a steady rate of between 4% and 6% a year during the sixties. The combination of both rapid demographic and industrial expansion was typical for developing countries in Turkey's position. The labour force increased greatly, but so too did the unemployed, proportionately and absolutely. Trade union membership rocketed after 1967, and between 1960-70 rose from about 250,000 to over 2,000,000. Enterprises affiliated to employers' unions rose from 1,500 to over 10,000.⁵ In political terms a key area of growth was higher education, which in five years from 1965 to 1969 increased its numbers from less than 100,000 to over 150,000. This included both universities and teachers' training colleges, where ultimately the fascists were to gain a major hold. At the same time religious colleges quintupled their intake from 10,000 to 50,000 recruits. West European countries experienced a similarly rapid increase in their student bodies at a time of generalized economic growth. In Turkey not only was this process much fiercer in terms of the impact on the inherited structures, so too was the influence of the changes in the world political climate. The US decision to invade and bomb Vietnam in 1965; the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' in 1966; Che Guevara's example in Bolivia in 1967: all helped to inspire revolutionary sentiments in students across the world. In Turkey the 'Third World' themes of this moment seemed all the more compelling, especially as the United States had military bases across the country, and President Johnson had prevented İnönü from intervening in Cyprus. Hostility to reactionary Greek influence in Cyprus was a heady 'leftist' brew of Turkic anti-Americanism.

⁵ In the course of the 1960s alone, the population grew from 27 to 35 million, with the urban population rising from 9 to 14 million. Despite this dramatic increase in urbanization, the demographic pressure in the villages was reinforced by two million inhabitants. For data on the size of trade unions, the size of the student population and other politico-demographic data see Jacob Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, Leiden 1974.

In this atmosphere the relatively staid if eclectic pages of Avcioglu's *Yön* diminished in their appeal. The circulation had sunk gradually towards 10,000 sales and it closed in early 1967. Its place was taken by two more strident competing weeklies: *Ant* and *Türk Solu*. Under the banner of 'Independence and Social Justice', *Ant* (which means 'pledge') was an Istanbul weekly, founded in January 1967, which supported the more radical and activist tendency in TTP. Its contributors included Yaşar Kemal and Can Yücel, respectively the best Turkish novelist and poet of the time. *Türk Solu* was even more rabidly anti-American than *Ant*, and its line was inspired by Mihri Belli, who had failed to gain the leadership of TTP in the 1950s. He had been a contributor to *Yön* where he supported the arguments for a broad national front. Now he called for a 'National Democratic Revolution' with youth as its vanguard. The difference between Belli's *Türk Solu* and the *Yön* of Avcioglu was that the latter wished to rely upon the patriotic officers and had himself been a member of the military-appointed 1960 Constituency Assembly, while Belli—having come from the TTP and having been outflanked politically by TTP in the early sixties—needed to organize a distinct power base for himself. Hence his stress on independent student militancy as a strategy of opening a path for the radical officers. Students would agitate, officers would strike, and a national junta would take power.

1968—'The National Democratic Revolution'

In this already existing hothouse atmosphere of Turkish student politics, the dramatic events of 1968 (the Tet offensive in February, the French student rising in May, and the Czech invasion in August) had an even greater impact than in most countries. With Belli's 'National Democratic Revolution' (or NDR) as their siren call, students in Istanbul began to occupy their campus buildings as soon as word reached them of the Sorbonne take over. In the West, May signified the beginning of something consciously unorthodox, revolutionary but not Communist; in Turkey, on the other hand, there was no similar sense of unorthodoxy nor a feeling of a break with Stalinism such as was experienced by their European counterparts. Instead there was a profound sense of continuity and the renovation of national revolutionary tradition. This absent break with the past (with Stalinism and Kemalism in particular) moreover contributed to one of the gravest crises of the Turkish left when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia just three months after the first student occupations in Istanbul and at the height of the new militancy. The TTP student group, in particular, was unable to respond to the temper of the times. When it tried to approach Aybar for advice on the sit-in he made himself unavailable. Meanwhile, students attracted to the NDR line tried to push the militants into direct action. The most charismatic was the warm and handsome Deniz Gezmiş, who having read Carlos Marighella's guerrilla manual led a group to capture a soldier of US imperialism. Unfortunately under cover of night they kidnapped a black, whom they then had to release because of his colour! In another, more serious incident, a student was killed while demonstrating against the visit of the US Sixth Fleet, and the police were successfully chased away from his funeral. In this atmosphere TTP students, who had provided the

basis of the student organization, were able to define themselves only negatively, and the energy of the movement flowed towards the NDR line.

But Aybar had other considerations. Because of the change in the electoral law, TTP could not hope to repeat its 1965 success and he shifted emphasis from 'class interest' to 'human freedom' in an attempt to broaden its appeal—especially to Kurds and Alevis. His emphasis on humanism was both sincere and calculated. He felt that socialist ideas had reached their 'natural' limit in Turkey for the time being. Hence his vigorous condemnation of the Soviet invasion. He was opposed by the pro-Soviet cadres in the apparatus, and their apparently 'harder' line won the support of the younger Istanbul militants. Aybar won the TTP Congress vote on the issue, but the generational polarization of the party crippled it permanently. Not only did its representation collapse to two in the Assembly the following year, but its local chapters were unable to hold their own against the burgeoning numbers of NDR followers. Aybar resigned, and TTP effectively folded. Its *legalism* lost it its real potential.

Thus Belli, the undisputed leader of the NDR movement, became the spiritual father of Dev-Genç, a hybrid formation which was part student movement, part revolutionary association. Since Belli had no desire to create a real party which might menace his hoped-for alliance with the military, Dev-Genç provided its members with almost no experience of organizational discipline. It was not surprising, therefore that, at the peak of its influence in 1969–70, the group began a series of inevitable schisms and divisions. The first defection came about as a result of Belli's refusal to print an article which challenged the concept that Turkish society still contained a significant feudal remnant. The split-off group responded by starting a new journal called *Proleter Devrimci Aydinlik* (PDA). (We will return later to the effect of these spurious debates over Turkish history which functioned in the end to alienate serious militants from theory altogether.) The real problem was inherent in the heart of NDR strategy itself: if the presupposition for revolution was the assumption of power by a 'radical junta,' what should be the role of Marxists? The PDA split sharply posed this question; some time later they found an answer: Maoism. Other dissidents within Dev Genç, however, were not attracted to the Maoist enthusiasm for a protracted peoples' war waged from the countryside. Not only did they regard the peasantry as more politically backward than the urban masses, but they were also eager to find something quicker than a long politico-military detour through the countryside as a route to revolution. These NDR militants, therefore, were captivated by Guevarist ideas of urban-guerilla 'focoism' adapted to a Turkish terrain where a revolutionary junta was foreseen as imminent. The result was a compelling 'fit' between Guevarist concepts of revolutionary immediacy and the tradition of left-Kemalism.⁶

⁶ Régis Debray wrote: 'Under certain conditions, the political and military are not separate but form one organic whole . . . The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla foco itself. The guerrilla force is the Party in embryo. This is the staggering novelty introduced by the Cuban revolution.' (*Revolution in the Revolution*, London 1968, p. 120.)

Focoism or Proletarian Politics?

But at least it could be said that Guevara died in 1967 before the proletarian risings in his own Argentina presented Latin America with an alternative to the guerilla column. In Turkey it was the other way round: focoism followed a working class mobilization, on 16 June 1970. NDR had called for a protest against legislation which threatened to limit trade-union organization. It would have been pleased if 20,000 had turned up. Instead, spontaneously and from all quarters of Istanbul, over 100,000 workers demonstrated. The police tried to hold them back, and then called the military. The authorities raised the bridges over the Golden Horn to try and stop the march. But with women in the lead—the historic sign of class temper—the demonstrators breached the defences. There was one small clash, in which a policeman and two workers were killed, and some arrests. The workers broke into the police stations to free their friends. There was no looting or other violence. In the Turkish scene this spontaneous discipline was perhaps most impressive of all. Proletarian politics was now on the agenda.

The 16th of June had a traumatic effect upon Mihri Belli's 'National Democratic Revolution.' In the past, NDR students had fought the police, but whenever the military appeared they dispersed, shouting 'Army and Students Hand in Hand,' or 'On to the National Front!' Suddenly the massive support for the demonstration showed that the working class movement had ripened, but the NDR, conditioned by its ideology and implicated in the collapse of the Istanbul branch of TRP, mistook the message. Instead of recognizing that the new popular combativity was a signal for renewing political agitation in proletarian milieux they interpreted it as a clarion call for the beginning of the armed struggle and they took to the mountains. THKO, the 'Peoples' Liberation Army', was first to strike, led by the charismatic Deniz Gezmiş. A second group, known as the THKP-C, the 'Peoples Liberation Party and Front,' soon followed suit with slightly more technical success. It was led by Mahir Çayan who later became a central cult figure for the entire Turkish revolutionary movement. Dangerously egocentric and tormented by fears of his own 'pacifism,' Çayan was killed before he was thirty, after leading his group to rob banks and seize hostages for ransom. The initial successes of the new guerrilla groups, coming so quickly on the heels of the working-class action of 16 June, embolden hopes of a rapid move by the NDR's putative allies in the military. Indeed, after so many years of agitation there were, in fact, circles of left-inclined officers in the armed forces, but far from being able to organize a coup, these leftist plotters were quickly suppressed by their superiors. The military regime which took power on 12 March 1971 used martial law to round up thousands of revolutionary students and workers, while simultaneously launching a major drive to smash the embryonic guerrilla groups. The military aim in 1971 was quite limited: rather than supplanting the existing capitalist system or installing their own dictatorship, the armed forces were content to pursue a viciously effective 'counter-guerrilla' campaign with their American equipment. Hundreds of NDR militants were horribly tortured by their military 'allies.'

At first, the overwhelming majority of left tendencies had published proclamations supporting the military's assumption of power. In some between one could sense the lines the pressure of the teeth against the tongue. But because of its roots in the NDR the left felt obliged to interpret the intervention as its own success and failed hopelessly to uphold the principle of the popular vote. Sustained by a mystical faith in the 'left' wing of the Junta, it accepted a guerrilla fight *against* the army. The sense of defeat was therefore all the more profound in prison, as there could be no pride in having resisted an enemy to the last. It was very much the left's *own* defeat. Amongst some of the leading militants, jailed *en famille*, the obviousness of this broke their old fanaticism. Political self-criticism was combined with personal tragedies. The sense of having betrayed the masses, of having acted in the interests of imperialism in willingly serving the Kemalist junta, the growing awareness of ignorance of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, weighed heavily over the consciousness of these young militants. There was an inevitable mystic-moralistic quality in these very human inner conflicts, inevitable because of the subjectivity imposed by prison conditions and the inadequacy of their socialist *culture*. In the midst of all these torrents of self-criticism, anyone could see that Marxist politics in Turkey was bound to undergo a significant change.

There were two points on which almost everyone agreed: the major shortcomings of the movement in general had been the lack of a firm relationship with workers, and the lack of international relations or global perspective. Behind this consensus was a struggle between two lines which can be schematically identified as: (i) a tendency to make radical self-criticism about the past, and (ii) a tendency to accept the essence of the past whilst making some 'tactical' concessions to preserve continuity. For a number of reasons at the time, all this made Maoism particularly attractive to certain militant-leaders. China was stepping up its criticisms of the USSR to hysterical levels, and naturally those who had associated themselves with armed expeditions did not feel sympathetic to the moderation associated with Moscow. The People's Liberation Army in particular could explain the disastrous end of their childish focoism as something which stemmed from an incorrect estimate of the Soviet Union. If the USSR had not been 'social-imperialist' it would have helped and victory would have been achieved! Suddenly, the bulk of the Liberation Army people became Maoist. The fact that they could now argue for 'People's War', also solved the problem of their missing relationship with the proletariat.

The Search for New Strategies

Had these arguments been limited to a few prisoners in a general context of serious re-assessment and over a sufficient time to learn about what the People's Republic of China was actually doing internationally, then little harm would have been done. But this was not the case. In 1974 there was an amnesty and the militants found themselves released into a situation where the mass youth following of the left had grown enormously, despite the debacle of its actions. Suddenly forced back to life, the left mutated into a wild variety of groups and sects, much more diverse and complex than in the sixties, and a frantic *strategy hunting* was

indulged in with often absurd results. In an elaborate repetition of the way 'focoism' was embraced, 'universal' theories or received lines from different socialist states were incorporated wholesale into the Turkish context. One of the determining reasons for this wasteful and mentally exhausting process was the vacuousness of the debate in the 1960's. Then a foreign observer might have thought the whole left was engaged in a discussion about the historic presence of feudalism in Turkey. In fact the arguments were formalistic and a priori, the twists and turns of their scholasticism mocked the idea that theory was a foundation for practice. Militants became fed up with historical analysis, and had no tradition of proven political theory to draw upon. They thus launched into action again after prison in the midst of an utter confusion of ideas. In particular, there was no Marxist analysis of Turkish life or politics which approached the country from the point of view of the masses. Indeed, even this formulation concedes too much to those debates. The historical class experience of Turkish workers and peasants had become highly varied. But socialists were determined to change it, before they really knew what it was.

It was hardly compensation that the Army was similarly foolish. The coup of March 1971 was meant to save the 'fatherland'. Such generosity was not needed, and somewhat absurdly, the soldiers replaced Demirel with a civilian, technocratic 'brain cabinet' under Erim. Far from welding together a new popular consensus against the left, the Army's repression in 1971 succeeded only in creating resistance from all levels of Turkish society. In an attempt to control meat prices, for example, the soldiers arrested butchers; to restore a semblance of order they shaved hippies and closed popular coffee shops. Meanwhile the military intervention was polarizing the Republican People's Party. İnönü, the successor to Atatürk and the statesmen who introduced democracy to Turkey in 1946, was still head of the RPP and welcomed the military role. But Ecevit did not. He had introduced the legislation after the 1960 coup that enabled workers to strike, and now he became the most vocal opponent to the governments appointed by the Army. With enviable strategic vision, he tried to renovate the base of the RPP by channelling the new working class militancy which had been revealed in the 16 June demonstration and which the far left had so tragically ignored. Presenting himself as the 'people's hope,' he challenged İnönü, and, much to the general surprise, forced the older statesman to step down from the helm of the RPP. This meant that both of Turkey's main parties were now opposed to the continuing political dominance of the military, and when General Gurler attempted to make himself President, both Ecevit and Demirel combined their votes in the Assembly to block him. As a result, new elections were held, the RPP became the biggest party (although fatefully short of an absolute majority), and Ecevit took office as Prime Minister in partnership with the National Salvation Party.

The Emergence of the Fascist Menace

Immediately, the key issue was an amnesty for the militants rounded up during the army's interregnum. Previously, the few thousand guerrillas had been holding the country at gunpoint, now their freedom

became essential, not because of any agreement with their beliefs, but because the question of amnesty came to symbolize the return to democracy and civil rights. Ecevit insisted upon a release, one section of the Salvation Party voted against, but the partial legislation which resulted, in which some would be given freedom and others not, went to the constitutional court, who found it discriminatory and ordered a complete release of those still imprisoned for political reasons. When they came out, they found a much greater degree of support and sympathy for their cause than before they had been rounded up. Yet, ominously, the new temper of militancy in the early seventies was not monopolized by the left. Ecevit's need to make an alliance with the National Salvation Party was significant in this respect. Not only had these Islamic fundamentalists made considerable parliamentary and popular gains, but so too had the fascist National Action Party. It was the spectacular growth of a paramilitary challenge from the far right which was to eventually force the revolutionary left into a second round of armed struggle.

In 1974, just after the amnesty, the Greek Junta attempted to annex Cyprus and when the British Labour government refused to intervene, the Turkish Army invaded on Ecevit's orders. The 'People's Hero' became a national hero too. On the whole, the left behaved creditably and spurned chauvinist celebration of the military success. In the cabinet, however, Erbakan, head of the National Salvation Party, tried to take his share of the glory, and Ecevit felt himself increasingly fettered by his coalition. He then made a decisive error. Presuming that his reputation would now enable him to carry the day, he tried to govern alone with the aim of calling elections, which would certainly have swept him to power with an absolute majority at that time. However, the Constitution forbade the calling of interim elections before they were due, without an absolute vote in the Assembly. This 'democratic' device boomeranged: it deprived Ecevit of the power to dissolve the Assembly and to obtain a mandate to rule alone. Neither Demirel nor the smaller parties would vote themselves out of the Assembly, and they refused to endorse elections. Instead, under the canny leadership of Demirel, a right-wing coalition of the Justice, Action and Salvation parties took office.

The injury to Turkey was devastating and may prove permanent. The Right did not simply take power, they plundered the state. Positions in the bureaucracy were shared out, while the economy was inflated by a false boom financed by huge and irresponsible foreign borrowing. The main beneficiaries of this official piracy were the fascists, whose 'Grey Wolf Commandoes' now acquired state protection and official sinecures. The consequence was a violent polarization between the left and the extreme right, with Ecevit helplessly in opposition. The error he made seemed incomprehensible, but is now clear: his fault then and subsequently was to rely upon himself at a time when Turkey no longer needed a saviour. If a political leadership had existed which was capable of tapping the potential of working-class militancy, the country might have been spared the decade that followed with its rising graph of violence and political terror. But the presence of the fascists and their increasingly effective emplacement in the educational

system, local government and armed forces threw the left into a *predominately defensive, but necessarily combative armed struggle*. Under such conditions it was impossible to shake off the legacy of focoism or to make a new political departure.

III. An Anatomy of the Left in the 1970s

The Independent Left

By sheer number of incarnations, Maoism appeared to be the dominant current within the post-amnesty left as no less than five substantial sects feuded with each other over the local franchise of the Cultural Revolution. Significantly, however, the two largest organizations of the Turkish left—and those most closely linked to the original, pre-Maoist NDR armed struggle movement—remained independent of the sinophile pole. The continuing vitality of the Cuban 'model' in the early 1970s prevented their capitulation to either of the two main variants of Maoism (i.e. the formalist radicalism of Lin Piao or the serpentine duplicity of Chou Enlai—both of which had the Great Helmsman's head stamped in obverse). For these non-Maoist currents, Mahir Çayan was the legendary figure and the great majority of the students who had become socialists during the period of military rule did so under the spell of his legend. After the amnesty, however, the followers of Çayan underwent a dual crisis of leadership and strategy. This crisis stemmed from the almost total discrepancy between the attitudes of the experienced members, who had become hostile to the suicidal adventurism of Çayan's actions, and the naïve enthusiasm of the younger militants outside prison who continued to idolize Çayan. After a period of wavering and confusion, two major lines emerged. Some leaders responded to the enthusiasm of the younger generation and thus captured the greater part of this potential. Others who explicitly criticised Çayan founded a smaller group known through their journal as *Kurtuluş* (Liberation).

Immediately after the split it seemed as if *Kurtuluş* despite its smaller size had the best chance of accomplishing a theoretical and practical renovation. As its leaders moved away from Çayanite adventurism, they seem to be rediscovering a more orthodox and disciplined Marxist politics. Meanwhile the larger group, which eventually called itself Devrimci-Yol (Revolutionary Way) and had originally embraced Çayan's formulations in a dogmatic mode, retained the loose federalist structure which had characterized the earlier, ill-fated Dev-Genç. Paradoxically, as the more responsible leaders of Devrimci-Yol began to respond to both the impracticality of their credo and the tensions inherent in their fluid organizational form, they became gradually more open to contemporary Marxist thinking, while *Kurtuluş* increasingly became bogged down in orthodoxy and failed to sustain its initial critical attitude. Stalinism, for example, although common to both groups, had a far more deleterious impact on the evolution of *Kurtuluş* which adopted a Leninism 'mastered' through the works of Stalin. This contributed to making *Kurtuluş* more capable bureaucratically, but impoverished its internal life and at its height at the end of the seventies, the 'theoretical' monthly of *Kurtuluş* sold up to 12,000 copies

while its weekly had perhaps twice that circulation. Devrimci-Yol's fortnightly, by contrast, was at one point selling 100,000 copies. Moreover, the latter organization (as we have noted in the case of the famous Taksim assembly) could mobilize far broader support in Istanbul and had a substantial organizational network throughout Anatolia.⁷

Despite these important differences, however, *Kurtuluş* and Devrimci-Yol (together with some smaller groups and a large number of unaffiliated individuals) continued to constitute a 'third force' of sorts on the Turkish left, without a loyalty to any official ideology experienced as such. The overall potential of this large, active and *sui generis* left is evident: it represented the key for a major breakthrough which might, under certain conditions, have led (and still might) toward the formation of a new mass socialist party with democratic norms and a grasp of the originality of the Turkish social formation. Perhaps the most important (and arduous) question in this article is precisely why this breakthrough never occurred and why the 'independent' forces of the Turkish left remained trapped within a field of sectarian politics, between the Maoists on one hand, and what in Turkey are known as the 'Soviets', on the other.

The Maoists

The most important Maoist group, as previously explained, emerged from the PDA split in the NDR movement who become pro-Chinese well before the 1971 coup. Originally called 'campus Maoists', the PDA possessed a talented nucleus of middle-class intellectuals and was able to launch a highly successful daily paper, *Aydinlik*. Experts in Maoist argumentation and ritualistic self-criticism, the PDA was able to negotiate the tortuous path of sinophilic orthodoxy, following the Peking line through its various abrupt changes of direction and emphasis. To some extent PDA's Maoism has also drawn an advantage from its resonance with anti-Russian propaganda and nationalist traditions in Turkey. Given PDA's scrupulous orthodoxy and successful mass press, other Maoist sects have had to challenge them on a different terrain. The political competition in Turkey sometimes resembles an athletic one; the only way to overtake another group is by running on a different track, and *Aydinlik's* weakness was 'militancy.' After the military coup other Maoists attempted to outflank *Aydinlik's* leadership

⁷ Because of its broad presence, Devrimci-Yol had to confront fascist attacks more often than any of its rivals. This, and its greater linkages to the masses, tended to make it more politically responsible, but it was still trapped by its official 'Cayanist' ideology. The danger of this was vividly demonstrated by the split-off of the so-called Devrimci-Sol (Revolutionary Left) which openly defended Cayan's idea that the role of an 'armed vanguard of the people' should be to upset the 'artificial balance' kept by the local state and imperialism, and thus to allow the eruption of the underlying 'revolutionary situation.' Amongst their criticisms of Devrimci-Yol, oddly enough, was its establishment of a newspaper (because this had been explicitly condemned by Cayan earlier as 'opportunism') and its refusal to launch full-scale terrorist offensives against the state. Thus one of their first acts was to claim the assassination of Erim, the first Prime Minister after 12 March 1971. Their foolishness was evident in their slogans, such as: 'God forgives, but Devrimci-Sol does not!' or 'Policeman! Take care, you're in an Devrimci-Sol zone!'

by issuing precipitate and infantile calls for a popular uprising. They circulated a clandestine paper which invited readers, almost with a RSVP, to join in 'the people's war.' The whereabouts and timing of this 'war' were rather vague; however, amongst some peasants and in the Kurdish regions the call was taken seriously. One militant thought he had enough ammunition to set off the sparks, and this was the beginning of TIKKO or TKP-ML, a narrow-minded group which makes a special point about its 'ruthlessness'. Meanwhile another Maoist group which has competed with *Aydinlik* by being more militant is HK, the Peoples Liberation group, who precipitated the May Day disaster at Taksim Square described at the beginning of the article. Converting to 'Maoism' after the amnesty and representing the bulk of the Liberation Army guerrilla movement, HK temporarily became the largest of the pro-Peking factions. However they found it too awkward and distasteful to follow the Chinese leadership in giving support to Pinochet, Holden Roberto and so on. Yet when they tried to evade such embarrassing matters they were attacked by *Aydinlik* for not being consistently Maoist. They were thus relieved when the break with Albania allowed them to follow Hoxa and abandon official Chinese politics. Maoism had been an ill-fitting garment for the People's Liberation militants and better suited the less revolutionary *Aydinlik* and the congeries of smaller Maoist grouplets. *Aydinlik* itself retained influence because of the flair with which the paper was edited, enabling it to score some notable scoops.

The 'Sovietics'

The growth of pro-Soviet sentiment on the Turkish new left occurred after the cresting of Maoism in 1974-5 and reflected a growing disillusionment with the rightward direction of Chinese foreign policy. The Maoists had, in their own crude way, originally brought the question of internationalism to the fore, but with Pekings' increasingly brazen support for such as Pinochet and the Shah many militants became sympathetic to the seemingly more progressive international stance of the USSR. This rebound from Maoism allowed the old TKP to become a significant party in Turkey for the first time, but without allowing it to claim a monopoly over pro-Soviet politics as two other Moscow-oriented groups emerged. TTP is the best known of these, probably because of its name and historic connections. It was refounded after the amnesty by Behice Boran, and has a small following with nothing like the former national presence of the old TKP. In the late seventies its papers had a circulation of 3,000, which made it considerably smaller in the radius of its influence than the TKP. TSHP, the Turkish Socialist Workers Party, the third pro-soviet group, has a curious national heritage. Its core consists of followers of the old Communist, Hikmet Kivilcimli, who was renowned for his voluminous and rather exotic writings advocating a uniquely 'Turkish synthesis of Leninism' (at one point he even founded a 'Fatherland Party'). Kivilcimli fled the country after the 1971 coup and died in exile in Yugoslavia. After the amnesty some of his followers teamed up with a group of ex-TKP supporters to create the TSHP.

In 1975 the entire balance of influence within the Turkish left was shifted by TKP's successful capture of posts inside DISK at its annual congress. Suddenly TKP followers found themselves parachuted into the leadership of the country's most militant union movement under the banner of 'Peace and Social Progress.' The moment was one of the most decisive in the history of the Turkish working class. DISK had retained great prestige during the coup and had expanded rapidly after the victory of Ecevit. Since its foundation DISK had remained primarily a regional confederation centred around the industrial belt of the Istanbul-Marmara region. By the mid-seventies, however, a dramatic expansion of industrial investment in central Anatolia offered DISK the opportunity to acquire national influence and achieve a key breakthrough in the state sector (long dominated by the more right-wing confederation, Turk İş). In Seydişehir, near Konya, a vast aluminum plant was being built while new facilities were being added to the giant, Soviet-financed steel complex at Iskenderun. The importance of organizing this new proletariat, moreover, was not merely the augmentation of trade union power; for young workers from a peasant background, membership in DISK implied a radical break with traditional politics of deference and reliance on patrons—DISK cleared the way for involvement in secular, socialist politics. Thus the TKP cadre within DISK were faced with the challenge of leading the majority of the left in supporting the slow, arduous work of organizing the new segments of the working class and consolidating DISK's power on a national scale. The TKP leadership, however, were more concerned with the selfish preservation of their own dominance within DISK and refused to unite with other left-wing currents. Indeed, they joined with right-wing organizers and bureaucrats to purge the other left elements—especially the TKP supporters in DISK unions. They acted virtually as a political police force within DISK to prevent all other socialist 'infiltration.'

The result was a three-fold disaster. *First*, and most importantly, the struggles in Anatolia were lost. At the beginning the big aluminum plants were won, but instead of intensifying the workers' education, TKP tried to win their confidence by 'consumer-society' lures—establishing supermarkets, etc. The fascists then moved in, almost certainly with the encouragement of the Demirel government, and the workers—politically and organizationally unprepared to fight—passively surrendered. Meanwhile in Iskenderun the fascist union won the workers' referendum outright and recruitment into the metalworkers' union of DISK (Maden İş) abruptly halted. The *second* consequence was the failure of the principal actions initiated by the TKP. To compensate for their failure they called for a national strike and a walk-out by Maden İş workers in the private sector. An attempt to launch a daily DISK newspaper was also an expensive flop. The *third* consequence, of course, was the expulsion of other socialists from the unions. In general, instead of developing the politically inclusive character of DISK and its potential attraction for the new proletarian strata, the TKP exploited DISK as a politically exclusive surrogate party in its attempt to out-flank the rest of the revolutionary left. The ultimate result of its alliance with the rightists within DISK and its support for the RPP (from whom it hoped to obtain eventual legalization) was the destruction of its own position. At the 1978 DISK Congress the pro-TKP Chairman, Turkler,

was voted out in predictable fashion and most of the rkp cadre purged by the social democrats. The rkp's influence in DISK thus came to an end leaving the confederation much weaker than it should have been and the Turkish left even more isolated from decisive sectors of the working class.

The Fascist Terror

From 1973 onwards fascism grew far more swiftly than the left. Although the bourgeoisie in Turkey was quite fragmented, the fascist right under the leadership of Türkeş was a unified movement with a single command, that had successfully combined legal and illegal methods. It had its camps and its police chiefs, its deputies and its army officers, its assassins and thugs, and in some areas also it held power. The introduction of martial law in parts of the country, under Ecevit's premiership in 1979, did something to stem the fascist tide, which also carried along with it the usual flotsam of blunders. For example, there was a classic, premature attempt to reproduce a 'March on Rome' except that the necessary parcel bombs sent to various mayors did not arrive in time thanks to the inefficiency of the postal system. Although provocations like this have produced numerous senseless responses by elements of the far left, there was absolutely no symmetry between the terrorism of the fascist party, supported by the Demirel government and intent upon seizing power, and the adventurous acts of elements of the left, whose terrorism was the product of the innumerable setbacks and disorientation since the military coup. In some parts of Anatolia, moreover, an exceptional situation existed where the left groups became the only bulwark of protection for the people against National Action death squads. In these areas of the fiercest fascist terror, it was primarily the militants of Devrimci-Yol who had to bear the brunt of the anti-fascist struggle and local self-defense. In some towns before the introduction of martial law half of the community was literally under fascist control, while the other half was defended by revolutionaries. But even when villages and sections of cities became indirectly administered by the left groups, they showed a fatal inability to do more than display their martial courage. No communal reforms were launched or popular bodies created which might have shown the local people how to organize or improve their conditions. Thus when the army finally arrived to impose the more universal 'justice' of martial law, the people said to the militants, 'Thank you for protecting us, but now please go away.'

IV. A Painful Balance Sheet

A Superficial Marxism

While living through its own catastrophic defeats, the Turkish left has also suffered painful disillusionment elsewhere. It felt very keenly the destruction of Allende and the Tupamaros in Latin America. It watched with astonishment the developments in China. It rejoiced at first with Portugal, and then disciplined itself not to mention it again. It gnashed its teeth at the European Communists hurling Marx and Lenin overboard. It is still trying to digest the war between Vietnam and Cam-

bodia. It has had to undergo primitive education at a time when the demands of the moment were overwhelming, and it went into action before any training and with hardly a glimpse at 'the rules of the game'. It is not surprising, then, that its growth has been ulcerous. My criticisms have been sharp, and I think it evident that a major operation is necessary. Yet however severe, I do not feel myself to be the surgeon in this case, but rather the patient.

When the revolutionary movement began in the 1960s, an average militant trying to learn Marxist theory would have read classics such as *Anti-Dühring* or *What is to be Done?* learnt 'dialectical materialism' through Stalin's manual and Politzer's texts, and at the same time attempted a coherent explanation for himself of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, rising anti-Sovietism in the People's Republic of China and its Cultural Revolution, and the struggle of Che Guevara and other Latin American guerilla leaders. He could find very little 'native tradition' to help him in his confrontation with such events. At the same time, although there was a lot to be 'learned', there was a lot to *do*, too. The Turkish left could not but live through a warped growth. In the fragmentation that followed, although the groups undoubtedly represented different versions of Marxism and there was a great deal of hostility between them, there were obvious similarities amongst their cadres: in mentality, values and behaviour. In the first place this was due to a common class origin: most were students from petty-bourgeois families, and expressed the traditions of that sector. A militant from a working-class background would soon conform to the dominant pattern, in so far as he became a militant, and would thereby behave differently from his working-class friends. All in all, a relatively compelling form of revolutionary-conventional behaviour could be observed.

The way Marxism has been successful among students while it has not been in any real sense among the working class may be explained by the relative strength and weakness of the dominant ideology. As a pragmatic ideology of nationalism, with a strong emphasis on enlightenment and progress, Kemalism was ideal for a rising bourgeoisie. It is still a unifying ideology for the majority of the people—who have been constantly fed with it—and a pliable tool for the ruling classes who can justify both repression or liberalism with it. But it cannot endure the critical gaze of those with a higher level of education, whose radicalism it had initially encouraged. In such an encounter Marxist theory won a relatively easy victory; one that was too easy. The 'thought contents', in the newly converted militant's mind, are perhaps radically changed; however the method of thought itself remains relatively untouched. Marxism becomes a new doctrine, more convincing, but nevertheless a doctrine to be learnt by heart. There was, in other words, an appropriation of Marxism which transformed its theory into closed ideology, even a faith. One could see this as a necessary or inevitable stage in a process of transformation—if only the subsequent stages had followed. Until now the necessary conditions to conduct such a process have not come into being. It would have to include a political organization which in the Gramscian sense operates like a 'collective intellectual', raising the level of theoretical consciousness. In Turkish intellect

tual life, the left enjoys a scarcely rivalled supremacy. The great majority of thinkers, writers and artists are leftists, and a considerable number of them claim to be Marxists. Although this contributes to Turkey's having a cultural life which would be envied in some respects even by certain more advanced societies, at the same time there is a definite distance between socialist intellectuals and socialist political movements. This is as much a product of the unwillingness of the intelligentsia to become more active as the militants' common attitude of rejecting anything that seems so 'soft' as theory or art. The lack of such organic links, of course, contributes to the theoretical and cultural shallowness of the political cadres.

The Obsession with Power

In the peculiar political conjuncture of the late sixties, with a crisis of, and competition for, power, among the ruling classes, it was relatively easy for the vigorous student movement to become immersed in a debate on the *correct strategy* for seizing power. In this debate *TKP* had—rightly—emphasized the importance of capitalistic development. But it failed to advance a convincing 'revolutionary' strategy, and succumbed before the *NDR* which emphasized the 'underdeveloped', 'third world' character of Turkey. Even in this debate, at least the question of strategy was debated in relation to the structure of the country. However, afterwards, in the seventies, the question of strategy was approached as one takes up a cookery book to produce a marvellous dish—in which both the structure of the country and the masses were no more than mere ingredients. The question of power became an obsession. The fetishization of 'immediate' power and 'total' struggle drew the left further and further away from reality. It created an introvert quality amongst the revolutionary groups as a whole. Every group needs growth; the easiest way is to convert supporters of other groups; one group's mistake and loss means the reverse for the other; as each group is burdened with an equal number of disappointments, there is a constant traffic from one to the other which keeps everyone busy and content with minor gains. Each in its own way, every group from the *TKP* to *Kartulus* to *Aydinlik*, was so engaged.

In the process, 'revolutionary language' was transformed into a technical jargon. To win other militants each organization had to prove its own courage, in a way designed to attract militants, which of course scared away interested workers or peasants. The *TKP* tried 'soft' slogans about 'progress' with no class content whatsoever, but these seemed out of place, and the party's followers had to show-off *their* position in *DISK*, etc, with the results described. Before martial law the numerous journals that were published by the groups and tendencies were primarily aimed at stopping any loss of cadres. Far from attracting new members by speaking directly to the working class public about the real situation, these propaganda organs created little disquiet amongst the bourgeoisie and remained generally unintelligible.

As the groups gathered around their 'theories', which in reality function as emblems or perhaps trade-marks, militants define their specificity according to a few abstract formulae, which represent the 'honour' of

the group and are thus inevitably petrified. The general outcome was the gradual diminishing of internal democracy—this, in a country that is not traditionally famed for its democratic norms. The groups are thus isolated and inevitably pushed into *defensive* positions—defensive against the bourgeoisie as well as towards *other* groups. The Turkish left has for some time ceased to speak in a coherent way about national problems: a critique or analysis of questions of health and medicine, or transport and urbanization, or village organization, or factory life, is not even attempted. Instead of demonstrating that there are rational and reachable alternatives to the urgent—and obviously social—problems of everyday life, Turkish socialists offer voluminous debates as to whether or not the ‘Theory of the Three Worlds’ is opportunist.

Another factor which has helped to reproduce this kind of crippled politics, and also to keep the left divided in the face of the growing threat of fascism, has been the ubiquitous presence of the ‘traitor’. We are the best-intentioned people, we have science, the proletariat is the revolutionary class, the unwavering course of history is with us. In spite of all these wonderful assets, we barely make any revolutions worth mentioning. It cannot just be the enemy only that is hindering us, because capitalism is moribund, and the ruling classes have many crises. What is this unknown factor that is barring the way? It can only be a traitor. In our revolutionary movement, this archetype of the traitor has always been present in some form or another. Of course there may be a certain justification for the accusation in a few cases, but it is the accompanying attitude that is important. The belief lightens the burden, and, conversely, in order for the relief to be greater, so must be the dose of hatred of the betrayer. The more the pre-capitalist ideology is alive, the more room exists for the reproduction of these attitudes and thought mechanisms. In the Turkish socialist movement which is young and inexperienced, but also energetic and hopeful, which has seen itself as an alternative for power (however mistaken the vision) and has exhausted all the means and models devised for that end, today, in its semi-tragic astonishment, such mechanisms are necessary.

The Centrality of Socialist Democracy

I have stressed the factor of inexperience. One can predict that after the upheavals of the seventies, some of these problems will be solved in the eighties. For the Turkish left will no longer be *young*. To keep this kind of youth after such an experience would suggest a pathological inability to grow up. What could be the direction for a mature growth? The line of advance is not necessarily within the orthodox class organizations, and should certainly not be limited to them, especially with the conditions created by the fascist assault. Mass political organization would seem to have a greater potential in local associations of all kinds, from the big cities to the villages, where varieties of interest come together. Here, more democratic and egalitarian relations that might prefigure a future society could be pioneered. There are many spontaneous local movements which revolutionary socialists should help to articulate at a national level, without the exigencies of centralized decisions undermining democracy at the base level. A programme is of

prime importance in so far as its principles of action can be rooted in activity which itself draws upon real conditions, and is not imposed. As much unity as possible will be necessary, with democracy its absolutely necessary condition, since those who 'unite' will have come together with different histories. There can be no democratic and energetic unity based upon a 'liquidation' of the felt validity of the revolutionary experience of others. Similarly, concrete goals can be clarified only by democratic procedures, in which the cadres will have a lot to learn from workers and peasants, housewives and specialists. To reduce Marxism to a theory of armed struggle is to turn it into a theory of death. To understand it as a theory of life rather than a rationale for brave resistance, socialists in Turkey will have to submit to the creative power of those whom they aspire to lead.

There are few groups in Turkey, Communist, Maoist or independent, which would not pay lip-service to democracy. Indeed they would grant its importance: what is needed is *their* democracy. What is really necessary is a rather profound transformation. The fragmentation of the Turkish left as a whole, including many in the RPP, stems in part from a shared misconception. When various parties all accept a premise which is itself wrong, their subsequent disagreements become irreconcilable. It is an old law. Each sees in the other the falseness of *that* solution, and becomes committed to the 'correctness' of their own. But, as the premise is wrong, there can be no 'correct' solution. A resolution is only possible if the terms of the argument are transformed. It is in this respect that emphasis upon democracy challenges the universal characteristic of the Turkish left.

For what all Turkish socialists share in common still is the belief that they must seek an 'eastern' solution to the country's problems. This is true of Ecevit, the 'saviour of the state', who despite his more progressive policies is less capable of conducting plural politics than Demirel, who in this respect is the more 'advanced' figure. Ecevit's attempt to create a 'people's sector' of the economy when he got back to office in 1978 was typical of an *étatisme* designed to bring 'the masses' out of their backwardness, from above. The same perspective of getting Turkey to 'catch up' and obtain its 'independence' may be seen in all the other socialist groups. The attachment of the best and most open 'independents'—Dev-Yol and *Kartınlık*—to the traditions of their 'armed-struggle' past, to a semi-Stalinist version of Leninism, and a militarist solution to the problem of fascism clearly evoke an 'eastern' solution. So too, of course, do the slogans and 'analysis' of the Maoist groups. The RKP and its 'pro-Soviet' associates are distinctly not 'Eurocommunist' in their orientation, and their 'advanced democracy' is evidently more backward than that already on offer from the Turkish bourgeoisie during the 1970s. This is not to suggest that a 'Turko-communism' is needed which would seek to discover an equivalent to Berlinguer's 'historic compromise' with Christian Democracy. On the contrary, the left has already experienced exactly such a strategy in left-Kemalism, in that this had a similar identification with received forms of state-power.

The paradox which Marxists need to assimilate is that although Turkey

is a relatively backward country economically (it had a per capita GNP of Algeria and Mexico in 1977) and socially (its adult literacy rate was only 60% in 1975), it has been relatively *advanced* politically. Despite military interventions it has known a two-party system in which opposing leaders have changed office a number of times after a popular mandate, something which has never happened in Japan for example. This imbalance arose from the fact that the country was never directly colonized and has retained its own sovereignty; to its peculiar combination of 'West' and 'East'. An early nationalism that defied the Sultan, Atatürk's was both a modernizing and an unpopular mobilization. The whole problem of consent in Turkey, in a process of violent economic transformation, has thus become acutely difficult for the ruling class, which is at the same time one that knows the benefits of constitutional law.

The military intervention has now created a new situation for both left and right. In immediate terms the National Action Party is now less advantageously placed while the left has borne the brunt of a fierce repression. But hopefully the left will have learnt at least some of the bitter lessons of recent years and address itself in a more united and sober fashion to the task of building a socialist resistance with real roots among the oppressed and exploited. The contradictions of Turkish bourgeoisie have not been solved by the soldiers, and military rule, however indefinite, will not be able to suppress the potential for working class organization.

Correction: In Jon Halliday's article 'Capitalism and Socialism in East Asia', NLX 124, p. 9, Table 3, the entry for Singapore in column 7 for the year 1977, referring to its % share of world industrial production, should have read (0.10) and not (0.0).

Michèle Barrett

Materialist Aesthetics

Marxist aesthetics has long since rejected the reductionism of those who sought to 'explain' art simply by reference to its supposed determination in the interests or ideology of particular social classes. The shift away from economism, from the unsatisfactory and intolerant division between 'base' and 'superstructure', has engendered a radical reconsideration of the text, or cultural artefact, itself. This text, according to many varieties of contemporary Marxist criticism, must be recognized as a signifying system with its own powers of production: the production of meaning. An empiricist sociology of art has been eclipsed, and the methods of textual criticism found amenable to a Marxist purpose. Yet for some this has merely been to impale materialist aesthetics firmly on the other horn of the old dilemma, and one not necessarily providing a better vantage point from which to view the world of art. A sociological approach was at least more promising than a reading of Marx that tends to overlook the contents of his arguments and focusses instead on his use of metaphor and metonymy in writing them down.

Terry Lovell's *Pictures of Reality* and Janet Wolff's *The Social Production of Art* steer somewhat different paths through this set of problems but, taken together, represent a decisive advance in the project of mapping out a more satisfactory materialist basis for the study of culture.¹ One reason for this is that we are enabled to see the ways in which a particular historical conception of art has mythologized its non-social character and exacerbated the very split underlying the analytical dilemma. Janet Wolff, whose theoretical innovativeness is somewhat belied by a measured tone of argument, locates the ideological separation of 'art' from 'work' in the post-Renaissance cult of individual genius and the emergence of the dealer-critic system from earlier forms of patronage. Wolff elaborates a well-substantiated challenge to the supposed distinction between art and work, and provides a systematic demystification of the creative process: '... artistic activity as a uniquely different kind of work, with a unique, indeed transcendent, product is a mistaken notion based on certain historical developments, and wrongly generalized and taken to be essential to the nature of art.'²

Wolff and Lovell both argue for an approach to aesthetics that can attach weight to cultural consumption, or reception, as well as cultural production. There has often been a tendency to concentrate either on production (where the text is seen as the outcome of its social deter-

¹ *Pictures of Reality: Aesthetics, Politics, Pleasure*, London, British Film Institute, 1980; *The Social Production of Art*, London, Macmillan, 1981.

² *The Social Production of Art*, p. 17.

minants at the moment of creation), or on consumption (where the status of the text is arbitrary and the emphasis lies on the multiplicity of meanings constructed upon it at different moments of reception). Terry Lovell argues in this context that the degree of penetration of capital into cultural production makes it appropriate to consider cultural production and consumption in terms of the categories used in Marxism to analyse capitalist commodity production in general. She suggests that cultural artefacts differ from other commodities in that they are not inevitably 'used up' in the process of consumption and that in order to deal with them we need to develop the category of non-material needs ('wants of the fancy' rather than of the stomach). The difficulty of identifying cultural production with its commodity forms in capitalism should not lead us to abandon analysis of the use-value of cultural artefacts but should lead us to a more adequate account of the social construction of non-material needs and the ways in which they may be satisfied. This in turn could lead to a more satisfactory account of aesthetic pleasure than that offered by psychoanalytic attempts to explore this question: 'Cultural products are articulated structures of feeling and sensibility which derive from collective, shared experience as well as from individual desires and pleasures. The pleasure of the text stems at least in part from collective utopias, social wish fulfilment and social aspirations, and these are not simply the sublimated expression of more basic sexual desires.'³

Janet Wolff approaches the question of consumption in a rather different way, through an insistence on the importance of reception as constitutive of the meaning of cultural products. Reviewing the literature on interpretation, hermeneutics and reception aesthetics she argues against the search for a 'correct reading' of texts (leave alone the author's intended meaning), and suggests that we need to develop an understanding of the parameters within which meaning is constructed in the processes of reception. Such a theory of reading need not be unduly relativistic or voluntaristic, as will occur when questions of cultural production are altogether excluded, but would enable us to locate and explain the meaning of the text in a given social context. 'The reader is guided by the structure of the text, which means the range of possible readings is not infinite. More importantly, the way in which the reader engages with the text and constructs meaning is a function of his or her place in ideology and in society. In other words, the role of the reader is *creative*, but at the same time *situated*.'⁴

Cultural Politics

Although Wolff and Lovell differ in the ways in which the relationship between artistic production and consumption is construed, they share a commitment to exploration and explanation of this relationship as a key factor in the development of a theoretical perspective for cultural studies. In this respect it is no accident that these two authors are sociologists rather than renegade critics trained in film theory or fine art. Janet Wolff sees her project lying within the sociology of art, for which she finds Marxist sociology the most useful. Terry Lovell

³ *Pictures of Reality*, p. 61.

⁴ *The Social Production of Art*, p. 115.

introduces her book by mourning a failure to deliver a Marxist sociology of art, which she attributes not only to the baneful influence of Althusserianism (a point I shall return to) but to a general tendency to separate mass culture (often crudely seen as a tool of bourgeois ideology) from 'great' or 'authentic' art which may be appropriated by the political avant-garde.

Both of these authors take up, and offer a re-casting of, a problem that has bedevilled Marxist aesthetics. It is an issue which, perhaps more than any other, has demonstrated the weakness of the 'reflection' approach and pointed in the direction of a more serious consideration of cultural artefacts as systems of signification with internal powers for the construction of meaning. It concerns political intervention and ideological struggle in the arena of culture. Those who have argued a social determinist interpretation of art have tended to opt for formulas which, in the reductiveness employed to explain artistic production, have excluded the possibility of revolutionary intervention, except by recourse to idealist notions of 'great' artists who are able to transcend the limitation of their historical situation. This tendency may appear as rampant individualism, in claims resting on the transcending powers of individual artists, or (and more influential in the history of Marxist aesthetics) in the idea that the possibilities for genuinely politically authentic art lie solely within objectively given historically progressive classes. The legacy of Lukács has endowed us with two problematic questions here: (a) Does this approach offer any satisfactory account of individual creativity? The problem is encapsulated in Sartre's remark, quoted again by Wolff: 'Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry.'⁵ (b) Where does a reductive explanation of artistic production leave us with regard to cultural politics? Does 'progressiveness' in art rest on the class interests of artists and are particular modes of artistic expression intrinsically more 'progressive' than others?

The debates between Lukács and Brecht provide a salutary warning of the problems caused by extending a reductionist approach to cultural production to a theory of political intervention in art. Lukács's defence of aesthetic realism has justifiably been seen as the inevitable consequence of his view that cultural production should be analysed as the expression in ideology of historical class interests. Reflection theory, in its more sophisticated, as well as more vulgar, forms, has offered little in the way of an adequate theoretico-political basis for cultural struggle, and its failure to provide real purchase in this respect underlies much of the desire to topple this perspective from its earlier hegemonic status in Marxist aesthetics.

It is scarcely adequate to respond to the challenges of semiology, structuralism and post-structuralism by retreating into re-statement of the classic verities, although some Marxists horrified by the recent direction of cultural studies have attempted to jerk us to our senses in

⁵ *The Social Production of Art*, p. 20.

⁶ See *Aesthetics and Politics*, NLB, London, 1977.

this way.⁷ A major strength of the two books considered here, and a reason for remarking their contribution to materialist aesthetics, is that both suggest new ways of looking at these problems. In this sense they stem from a critical engagement with the claims of structuralism rather than from a position of dismissing its legitimacy.

Janet Wolff points out that Marxist aesthetics has tended to separate analysis of production from a theory of intervention, taking up art as ideology/reflection/superstructure or art as radical/cultural politics without adequately posing a relationship between these two strands of interest. She proposes a critical reconsideration of the base/superstructure model in which, rather than looking for general theoretical specification of the autonomy of the aesthetic, we might be able to specify the differential potential effectivity of cultural struggle in given social formations. This would involve an analysis of prevailing modes of aesthetic production and aesthetic ideology, and situating the status or scope of these in relation to more general features of the particular mode of production in question.⁸ Such an analysis would move us away from abstract formulations on the effectivity of cultural intervention and would enable us—to put it simply—to say that struggle at this level would be more productive in some situations than in others: 'That is why sweeping demands for cultural activism are both meaningless and pointless. Unless it is firmly linked with an understanding of contemporary cultural production, cultural intervention may be impossible, inappropriate, or completely ineffective.'⁹

Terry Lovell takes up these questions as a central pivot for the arguments of her book as a whole. She regards the Lukácsian position as unambiguously wrong, but for different reasons from the ones commonly put forward in critiques of aesthetic realism. She argues that the link often made between realism as an epistemological basis for the analysis of art, and realism as an aesthetic doctrine, is constructed on a fundamental misconception as to the nature of art. It rests on the unsubstantiated assumption that art operates primarily in the realm of knowledge and ideology, and it is this assumption that *Pictures of Reality* sets out to challenge: '... there is a third position from which realism can be questioned which challenges neither the conventions of realism, nor the realist epistemology on which it is based, the belief in a knowable external reality, but the belief that the goal of art is, or ought to be, to show things as they really are. I will argue that there is nothing in Marxist materialism and realism which dictates this goal for art, or the view that art is a form of knowledge.'¹⁰

Lovell argues that works of art do indeed produce ideas about history and the social world, and these ideas may be deemed either knowledge or ideology—but that such an assessment depends upon 'reference to independently acquired knowledge of that to which they refer'. The status of ideas expressed in art is determined '... elsewhere than in art, in the

⁷ See Richard Johnson's discussion of 'Culture/Ideology' in M. Barrett et al (eds.), *Ideology and Cultural Production*, London 1979.

⁸ These formulations draw explicitly on the work of Terry Eagleton and Pierre Macherey.

⁹ *The Social Production of Art*, p. 85.

¹⁰ *Pictures of Reality*, p. 87.

univocal language of science and history rather than the polysemic language of art.¹¹ From this it is argued that the cognitive dimension of art has been assigned an undue primacy by those Marxist aestheticians who have regarded art as either a vehicle for the expression of ideology or a vehicle for the dissemination of politically progressive knowledge. Lovell argues instead that this cognitive dimension of art is secondary, and that questions of knowledge and ideology have absorbed Marxist aesthetics to such an extent that we have failed even to begin to analyse aesthetic pleasure from a social point of view. A striking feature of both these books is that they open the way for consideration of the category of the aesthetic in its own right; they indicate sets of questions on pleasure, sensibility and value which may be asked from a materialist standpoint. Before commenting on this welcome development I want to turn to a major theoretical question so far left in suspension.

Althusser and Lacan

This question is Althusser, and the influence of Althusserianism on cultural studies. It may seem odd, indeed verging on disreputable, to have ignored this issue for so long in this review. The two authors can be sharply differentiated by their attitudes to the usefulness or otherwise of Althusserianism and Lovell's implacable arguments against this tendency will no doubt provide a significant axis on which her book is received. Lovell argues against philosophical 'conventionalism'—a term used to describe anti-empiricist arguments that insist on the theory-impregnated character of all languages of observation—on the general grounds that such positions inevitably lead to relativism and the abandonment of all claims to objective knowledge of a real world.¹² Conventionalism is counterposed to epistemological realism, and the latter proposed as a defining property of any Marxist materialism. These debates are now reasonably well known (although expressed here with unusual clarity) and Lovell's conclusion, that the post-Althusserian discourse theory popularized by Hindess and Hirst is incompatible with Marxism, will not shock many readers. Lovell insists that discourses can be subjected to stronger tests than those of immanent critique: a history of the Third Reich that omitted to mention the murder of six million Jews can be referred to a real world and not merely to any internal inconsistencies. While the weakness (or even absurdity) of discourse theory is now often recognized in relation to 'discursive objects' such as society and history, it is less apparent in the area of cultural studies where the objects are themselves discursive or signifying practices. But, she argues, the appeal of conventionalism in this context must be resisted since discourse theory will here suffer from its general refusal to provide objective knowledge.

¹¹ *Pictures of Reality*, p. 91. The terms used here by Lovell take up critically a distinction proposed by Galvano della Volpe, *Critique of Taste*, NLB, London, 1979.

¹² *Pictures of Reality*, p. 15 (Lovell writes: 'The limit position which all conventionalisms more or less approach is one in which the world is in effect constructed in and by theory. Given that there is no rational procedure for choosing between theories, relativism is the inevitable result. Epistemological relativism does not necessarily entail a denial that there is a real material world. But if our only access to it is via a succession of theories which describe it in mutually exclusive terms, then the concept of an independent reality ceases to have any force or function.')

More controversially, Lovell argues that cultural studies cannot retreat from discourse theory without confronting the connections between post-Althusserianism and Althusser's own theoretical position, which she sees as deeply imbued with conventionalism. Althusser's profound influence on cultural studies will render this task a painful one. A reading of Althusser is then given in which the following points are stressed: his conception of an ensemble of practices (economic, political, ideological, theoretical) dissolves the distinction between the material and the ideal; the concept of the 'real-concrete' constitutes only a tenuous link with realism; his theory of ideology lapses into relativism in being unable to specify how theoretical ideologies differ from scientific theories; the elimination of the knowing subject from the process of knowledge construction is incompatible with a realist epistemology. Lovell concludes that the attempt to 'rescue' Althusser for a realist Marxism must founder on the incompatibility of many of his propositions with the general requirements of such an epistemology.

This thesis is clearly an extremely contentious one and no doubt interpreters of Althusser from whom Lovell differs will take it up in some detail. Before commenting on the implications of this debate I want to identify two areas where Lovell's arguments point in a refreshing and instructive direction.

Firstly, Lovell summarily dismisses Althusser's attempt to remedy Marx's failure to provide a theory of the constitution of the individual subject through appropriation of the Lacanian version of psychoanalysis. As an account of gendered subjectivity Lovell sees it as little advance on Freud, whose inability to give a convincing account of female sexuality presents particular difficulties for a feminist reading of his work. She argues, moreover, that Lacan's obsession with women's lack of the phallus simply reproduces the phallogentricity of a culture whose real structuring absence is the clitoris. Leaving aside these awkward problems Lovell argues that Lacan's theory is in any case structurally disengaged from historical materialism. At no point does it consider the role of the family in the constitution of class subjectivity and class difference: '... it contains no reference from start to finish to social class and the social relations of production. It is undifferentiated, identical for all human individuals of whatever class, in any society.'¹³ The simplicity and brevity of this argument is provocative, but it rightly points to fundamental problems with any Marxist feminist use of Lacan and the corresponding difficulties of the transposition of Althusser's formulations onto the question of gender.¹⁴ Secondly, Lovell's break with Althusser's theory of ideology leads to some new formulations which cultural studies could profitably consider. In particular, more precise definitions of the problematic terms 'culture' and 'ideology' are usefully specified. Lovell argues for a much narrower definition of ideology, and refuses the conflation of culture and ideology so common in those strands of cultural studies that tend

¹³ *Pictures of Reality*, p. 44.

¹⁴ This problem is explored at greater length in my *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*, NLB, London, 1980.

to *assume* that culture is a sub-set of ideology. Working with a narrower definition would enable us to specify when and in what respects cultural production could be regarded as ideological. Cultural products are here seen as important 'bearers' of ideology, but as operating on emotive, aesthetic and evaluative dimensions which are not reducible to ideology. This definitional stringency, however painfully arrived at, does pay some dividends in providing a basis for considering the specificity of cultural and aesthetic processes.

It remains unclear, though, that Lovell's project in relation to Althusserianism is fully justified. It is paradoxical that *The Social Production of Art* can arrive at some comparable theoretical positions as Lovell's, and indeed undertake some of the type of work recommended in *Pictures of Reality*, whilst arguing within a framework sympathetic to Althusserian concepts. This hinges on the question of whether Althusser's theory of ideology really does constitute 'the backbone of Marxist cultural studies' as Lovell suggests. This, in turn, rests on whether 'Althusserianism' in this context is a coherent and systematic body of thought. I suspect not. Some people in cultural studies have been influenced by the Gramscian aspects of Althusser, emphasizing ideological struggle in a war of position; others have applied the propositions of the essay on 'Ideological State Apparatuses' and considered cultural practice in relation to reproduction of the social relations of production; others again have tried to work with the Althusser of 'Freud and Lacan'. But these are often highly selective and eclectic uses of Althusser's work and, just as it is difficult to square one bit of Althusser with another, so it is somewhat forced to see all of these aspects as systematically implied in any one use. While it is certainly true that these aggregated aspects of Althusser's work have had a tremendous influence, this influence does not necessarily rely on an internally consistent theoretical *œuvre*. Nor would I see such a close connection as does Lovell between Althusser and 'post-Althusserianism'. These developments represent a decisive break with Althusser and are virtually unrecognizable as stemming from at least some of the positions of their chronological and nominal predecessor. Terry Lovell's arguments must, however, force upon us an assessment and reconsideration of the internal contradictions of 'Althusserianism'.

As far as cultural studies is concerned, such a re-assessment must be of value. An unimaginative concern with art-as-ideology has tended to obscure the exploration of art in any other terms and has stunted potential analysis of the aesthetic level, either in general terms or as constituted historically in different societies. Both Lovell and Wolff, in moving away from a straightforward conflation of art with ideology and stressing the extent to which art should be subject to the forms of analysis governing other forms of social production, attempt to specify what is distinctive about aesthetic practice. *The Social Production of Art* and *Pictures of Reality* both challenge the mystification of art in capitalist society and in Marxist aesthetics. In so doing both point to the *social* character of art, stressing the role of the audience or reader in the constitution of aesthetic meaning and aesthetic pleasure.

Janet Wolff points out that the establishment of a distinct aesthetic

realm is a feature of capitalist society and that other societies have differed in the extent to which creative and imaginative work has been integrated into social production as a whole. Nevertheless, she argues, the aesthetic realm plays a specific role in contemporary capitalism and needs to be taken into account in any materialist analysis. Terry Lovell suggests that this understanding would need to be grounded in an analysis of non-material, but socially constructed, needs. Both point to artistic practice as having its meaning in processes of consumption as well as production and hence open the path to a more satisfactory account of aesthetic pleasure than has hitherto been possible. It remains an open question whether aesthetic pleasure is to be analysed in terms of form, of shared experience, of emotive dimensions, and how these developments might affect debates about aesthetic value. But what is interesting about these two books is that they indicate an area of investigation for too long ruled out of bounds by Marxist aesthetics and touched on only through varieties of bourgeois criticism or narrowly psychoanalytic approaches. The category of the aesthetic is here handed back to us as a legitimate object of materialist analysis.

Secularism and British Marxism

It was Raphael Samuel who last persuaded me to contribute to *New Left Review* eighteen years ago, and I am prompted by his essay on 'British Marxist Historians' (NLX 120) to do so again in the form of some comments on his discussion of the relationship between Marxist intellectuals and the free-thought movement.

To begin with, while there is an obvious connexion between British Marxism and Protestant Nonconformity, some of the individuals mentioned in this context are as good if not better representatives of the connexion with free-thought. Belfort Bax may have come from a Calvinistic Methodist background, and his attitude may have 'remained ethical and religious', but he was closely associated with the rationalist movement for several decades, as were such old leftists as Robert Blatchford and Pat Sloan. Several other former Christians were equally active as moderate Marxists and ethical humanists: F. J. Gould, Herbert Burrows and John Lewis, for example, who also remained respectively Positivist, Theosophist and Unitarian. Guy Aldred may have begun his career as a Christian boy-preacher, but he quickly made a reputation as a secularist speaker and writer before moving on to politics. Joseph Needham may be identified with Taoism and High Anglicanism, but also with scientific humanism. Jack Lindsay has been a frequent contributor to the free-thought press, and F. A. Ridley, who was trained to be a priest, became both a leading revolutionary socialist and a leading militant secularist (President of the National Secular Society and Editor of the *Freethinker* thirty years ago). E. P. Thompson may still show signs of his Dissenting missionary background, but also of the tradition of rationalist humanism—as in the titles of his papers in the 1950s (noted by Samuel) or in the Foreword to *The Poverty of Theory* (1978). The point is that many leading free-thinkers have had strong religious antecedents, so the emergence of leading Marxists from the same background is as often a symptom of anti-religious as of religious affiliation. (It has of course been argued that free-thought is itself a form of Protestant Nonconformity, but that is another story.) On a more topical level, it might be worth mentioning that Anthony Blunt's father was an Anglican priest!

Turning to the overt free-thought connexion, it is relevant that the main rationalist organization, the Rationalist Press Association, and its associated publisher, C. A. Watts (not 'C. and A. Watts'), always remained deliberately non-political—unlike the secularist and ethical movements, which were always on the (non-Marxist) left. This made it easier to accommodate Marxists, because there was no fear of infiltration or capture (the only serious threat, fifty years ago, was easily brushed off, and led indirectly to the formation of the Progressive League). Hence the large number of leading Marxist and fellow-travelling intellectuals found on rationalist platforms and

in rationalist publications: especially J. D. Bernal, Gordon Childe, Benjamin Farrington, J. B. S. Haldane, Jane Harrison, Hector Hawton, Lancelot Hogben, Julian Huxley, C. E. M. Joad, Harold Laski, Hyman Levy, David Stark Murray, Roy Pascal, Archibald Robertson and H. G. Wells. Laski was president of the RPA from 1929 to 1923, and Archibald Robertson and David Stark Murray were directors; Hawton ran it for nearly thirty years, but that was after he had moved away from Marxism. Robertson was extraordinarily active for more than forty years in the secularist and ethical as well as the rationalist movement. Haldane ran close, being a frequent contributor to the rationalist press (though not the *Freebinker*) for more than forty years right up to his death, which he discussed in a characteristic posthumous essay, reprinted in *Science and Life* (1968). It may be worth correcting some minor points about these last two. Robertson was converted to socialism and atheism not 'when an undergraduate at Oxford' but when a schoolboy at Winchester. He worked as a civil servant in the Admiralty for more than twenty years until his father's death in 1931 enabled him to drop both his job and his pseudonym, and he joined the Communist Party after Munich in 1938 (see his memoirs, 'The Making of a Rationalist', *Literary Guide*, February-June 1947, and his obituary, *Humanist*, December 1961). Haldane was nearly expelled from Eton for distributing not mere 'rationalist tracts' but a substantial book—variously described by Haldane himself as Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* or Metchnikoff's *The Nature of Man*.

A few other points ought to be clarified. The 'anti-biblical exegesis' characteristic of polemical free-thought was 'a staple fare of rationalist publications' not just 'in the 1920s' but continuously from Paine's *The Age of Reason* in the 1790s until the present day; it still appears also in some Marxist publications, such as the *Socialist Standard*. Joseph McCabe's translation of Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* was probably the most successful of all the publications of the RPA—first published in 1900 (not 1903), reprinted in the Cheap Reprints series in 1902 and in the Thinker's Library in 1929, and still selling thousands of copies a year after the Second World War. Incidentally, the Thinker's Library, which was published from 1929 to 1951, included many new books as well as classics. G. J. Holyoake wasn't a 'radical secularist' but a very moderate one, coining the term in 1851 in an entirely 'positive' sense; his paper the *Reasoner* appeared not just in 'the 1850s' but from 1846 to 1861 and it was preceded by the *Oracle of Reason* from 1841 to 1843 and followed by the *Reasoner and Secular World* in 1865. Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* was first published not in 1939 but in 1902, and his *Modern Science and Anarchism* not in 1912 but in 1901. It seems a pity not even to mention Bernal's huge book *Science in History*, published by Watts in 1954, or that Raymond Williams edited a New Thinker's Library in the 1960s.

The essay is refreshingly non-sectarian, but I must take up the one sectarian reference to anarchists: the footnote mentioning 'the vagaries of present-day North London and West Coast libertarianism', strangely contrasted with the puritanism and rationalism of Spanish anarchists eighty years ago rather than with the same qualities in British and American anarchists today. It would be easy to mention some of the vagaries of present-day Marxism in the same places, even in at least one of the individuals he discusses—but chivalry forbids.

But my general concluding comment—as someone brought up in the intellectual milieu where Marxism coexisted with other forms of socialism, including anarchism, and overlapped with the various strands of free-thought, including progressive religion—is that to understand British Marxism it is necessary to set even wider horizons, so as to include more rigorous analysis of the relevant aspects of progressive religion and free-thought and more careful attention to the fellow-travellers who straddled so many ideas at once and who influenced so many Marxists and non-Marxists.

How far, in the end, has British Marxism been just one episode in the long history of the idea of progress, falling between Herbert Spencer and Winwood Reade in the nineteenth century and Bertrand Russell and Julian Huxley in the twentieth century? This, at least, is what it looks like from outside.

Nicolas Walter

Editorial Note: Raphael Samuel asks us to point out that the dates given in his references to books were those of the edition he used, not of first publication.